

THE INTEGRATION OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES AND  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

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## ABSTRACT

INTEGRATION OF CONVENTIONAL FORCES AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES, by Major Michael D. Hastings, USA, 98 pages.

This study is designed to discover perceived issues that plague conventional forces and special operations forces (SOF) integration on the battlefield. The research did in fact show that although operational and tactical integration of these disparate forces is overall successful, there exist several impediments to a truly joint and combined arms fight. The methodology used to conduct the analysis is based on the doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) construct, and the most pertinent issues identified from the contemporary operational environment. Each facet of the DOTMLPF was underscored with examples from recent conventional force and special operations force integrated operations in Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and offers modest solutions to these matters. The recommendations affect doctrine, organization, training, material, and leadership; but find no cause to effect change or improvement to personnel and facilities within the Department of Defense. The recommendations are intended to increase the capabilities of both conventional forces and SOF, whether integrated or not.

While this study identifies several matters that hamper truly synergistic integration, it is ultimately up to senior leadership within the military to continue further study and analysis, and overcome the inertia that hinders our joint warfighting capability.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. (Lincoln 1863)

The Gettysburg Address

With respect this thesis is dedicated to the memory of Specialist Kyle G. Thomas, United States Army, A Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry (Airborne), killed in action 25 September, 2003 while defending freedom in Kirkuk, Iraq.

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## ACRONYMS

AI	Area of Interest
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
AO	Area of Operations
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BOS	Battlefield Operating Systems
C2	Command and Control
CAS	Close Air Support
CFSOCC	Coalition Forces Special Operations Component Command
CMTC	Combat Maneuver Training Center
CTC	Combat Training Centers
COE	Contemporary Operating Environment
DOTMLPF	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities
ETAC	Enlisted Terminal Air Controller (replaced by the term JTAC)
FM	Frequency Modulation
HF	High Frequency
JCAS	Joint Close Air Support
JFE	Joint Fires Element
JP	Joint Publication
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Force
JSOTF-N	Joint Special Operations Task Force-North
JTAC	Joint Terminal Air Controller



JSOA	Joint Special Operations Area
LNO	Liaison Officer
METT-TC	Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops available, Time, and Civilian considerations
METL	Mission Essential Task List
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NSS	National Security Strategy
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
ODA	Operational Detachment-Alpha
ODB	Operational Detachment-Bravo
OPCON	Operational Control
SF	Special Forces
SFG	Special Forces Group
SFLE	Special Forces Liaison Element
SOCCE	Special Operations Command and Control Element
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TACON	Tactical Control
TACP	Tactical Air Control Party
TACSAT	Tactical Satellite
TTP	Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures
WOT	War on Terrorism

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In Chechnya, we did not have a war which had been expected, for which the troops and staffs were preparing, which had been studied in academies and planned accordingly and which would have complied with regulations and field manuals. (Grau 1995)

Colonel General Anatoli Afanasyevich Shkirko

This thesis examines the question, What are the perceived issues that plague the integration of conventional forces and special operations forces (SOF) on the battlefield? Beginning with the twentieth century, combined arms have been integrated at the tactical level with maneuver forces directly controlling fires in support of their objectives. Armored units were used to penetrate defenses, and infantry followed closely in order to exploit these gains. By mid century, naval forces supported the land component during amphibious operations, and air superiority has been a decisive factor in all American victories, proving that the United States' ability to conduct joint warfare is the cornerstone of its doctrine. A visit to any tactical level headquarters will show that all functions of the battlefield operating systems (BOS) are represented on its staff. Combatant commanders think nothing of adjusting the task organization of their subordinate units to accomplish a specified mission, and integration is a way of life for the conventional forces. But what of integration with SOF? Are not SOF units operating in close proximity, and sometimes tasked with achieving like effects on the same objective? How does current doctrine address tactical integration of SOF and conventional forces? Coordination and deconfliction are minimally acceptable to tactical level commanders when sharing the same battlespace, however, command and control

(C2) integration must be attained to achieve synergistic effects. This is a critical seam that must be examined.

There are constants on the battlefield that withstand the test of time, aspects of terrain, weather, characteristics of offensive and defensive operations, that professional soldiers study and learn to incorporate into their own planning and decision-making cycle. However, the battlefield is also ever changing, forcing the true professional warrior to accept and adapt to that which he cannot template based on his current doctrine or dogma. The perceived advantages the US enjoys over its current and potential enemies in technology, weapons systems, and doctrine only demonstrate its superiority in a conventional, maneuver war against a modernized but less technologically advanced armed force. One need only to look at the stunning defeat of the Iraqi Army in 1991, the US contribution to the NATO victory against Serbia in 1999, and, of course, most recently the unparalleled speed and agility displayed by coalition ground maneuver forces during the first three weeks of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) to perceive this advantage.

What, however, of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) resembles these conflicts? Very little to be sure regarding maneuver warfare against a modernized force, for there has not been a single US or multinational armored or mechanized unit deployed to this area of operation. Neither the Taliban nor Al Qaeda possessed much in the form of modern, mechanized formations save a few rusting, former Soviet tanks. The conduct of operations in this theater was left under the responsibility of Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) through a joint special operations task force (JSOTF), now no longer a supporting command, but a *supported* command. This battlefield was by definition unconventional warfare (UW):

A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It includes guerilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert or clandestine operations as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape. (FM 1-02 2004, 1-193)

Images of bearded, SOF soldiers on horseback riding into battle with their Northern Alliance counterparts in Afghanistan, are in stark contrast to pictures of the US Army's 3-7th Cavalry spearheading the mechanized assault towards Baghdad. Yet, each of these attacks was the decisive operation for their respective theaters.

In Afghanistan, conventional forces found themselves for the first time playing a supporting role to SOF. An infantry task force, the 1-87th infantry battalion (TF 1-87) from the Army's 10th Mountain Division deployed to Uzbekistan to provide security for a SOF forward operating base (Briscoe and Kiper 2003, 74), and a US Navy aircraft carrier were tasked to provide direct support of SOF operations. A few months later in March of 2002, the JSOTF would be under the tactical control (TACON) of the combined joint task force-mountain (CJTF Mountain), commanded by Major General Paul Hagenbeck of the 10th Mountain Division. It was during Operation Anaconda that this combined force targeted known and suspected al Qaeda and Taliban holdouts in the Shah-i-Kot Mountains in eastern Afghanistan. However, approximately one-half of CJTF Mountain's 2,000 ground forces were SOF, including Navy SEALs, elements from two special forces groups, Army Rangers, USAF Special Tactics Squadron airmen, and SOF forces from Canada, Germany, Australia, Denmark, Norway, and France, as well as conventional forces from Hagenbeck's own 10th Mountain and the 101st Airborne divisions (Franks 2004, 377).

Clearly, the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) gleaned from OEF were incorporated into operations in Iraq. As a shaping effort in support of the combined forces land component command (CFLCC), SOF was divided into three JSOTFs; JSOTF-West, South, and North. In the western desert, JSOTF-West received operational control (OPCON), of an Army National Guard infantry battalion for security operations, while SOF forces supported the combined forces air component command (CFACC) to locate and destroy Iraqi theater ballistic missiles. In advance of CFLCC forces, the JSOTF-South seized key gas and oil platforms before Iraqi forces could instigate a natural disaster, and provided valuable intelligence to conventional forces ahead of the V Corps advance to Baghdad. In one instance, when the lead elements of the 3rd infantry division approached the bridge across the Euphrates river at An Nasiriyah, SOF already had “eyes on” and passed valuable intelligence that enabled a rapid and successful operation (Fontenot 2004, 134). Furthermore, once the US Army 4th Infantry Division’s northern option was deemed infeasible, the northern portion of the country was almost exclusively secured by JSOTF-North in conjunction with Kurdish fighters, who set the conditions for the airborne introduction of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Additionally, this brigade would be under the tactical control of the JSOTF- N for nearly a month.

As current trends no doubt illustrate, SOF and conventional force integration is a reality. But has doctrine laid the foundation for these relationships, or are operational and tactical commanders left to solve these issues? FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, states only that SOF and conventional forces may operate in close proximity to one another in the accomplishment of the joint force commander’s (JFC) mission, and that the JFC may determine the requirement to place an Army special

operations force (ARSOF) under a command relationship of a conventional ground force, but not vice-versa. This field manual correctly states that integration between the two forces is a critical concern, and lists several areas to include target deconfliction, C2 measures, and fire support coordinating measures that are the responsibility of liaison elements to deconflict. FM 100-25 further states that the responsibility is on special forces (SF) units to provide liaison to conventional forces at the corps, division, and lower commands with different size liaison officer (LNO) packages and responsibilities, but does not address the need for reciprocating requirements from the conventional force. JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, mirrors the shortcomings in FM 100-25 by stating that liaison with conventional forces is a SOF responsibility and their purpose is to advise, deconflict, and coordinate SOF activities with conventional forces command elements, and as necessity dictates to serve as a C2 element within the area of operations (AO) exercising OPCON or TACON of SOF units. Again, these doctrinal manuals address the previously accepted role of SOF, that of supporting, and not supported.

What does the conventional force provide as liaison when its role is that of supporting SOF? FM 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, dedicates one page to this topic and focuses mainly on coordination, highlighting such areas as anti-fratricide measures, establishing communication links, and identifying actions at potential weak points such as unit boundaries. Again, the focus appears to be that of two distinct organizations operating parallel but independent of one another, not integrated. Annex E, in FM 6-0 “Liaison,” provides little more than recommended rank by echelon and provides a checklist for an LNO handbook on recommended activities. This thesis will focus on how doctrine might be improved so that it better addresses SOF

and conventional forces integration so as to alleviate ambiguity of roles and responsibilities.

Since SOF is inherently a joint organization, and integration with conventional forces includes not only the Army, JP 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, outlines the doctrine and policy for joint C2. JP 0-2 states that unity of command is central to unity of effort, and in the joint arena C2 relationships are commonly determined to be support roles. Support defined is a relationship established by a superior commander between subordinate commanders when one organization should aid, complement, protect, or sustain another force (JP 0-2 2001, III-4). It is important to note this definition, as conventional forces most normally use OPCON or TACON to define C2 relationships. Furthermore, JP 0-2 states unless limited by the establishing directive, the supported commander will have the authority to exercise general direction of the supporting effort, and in turn the supporting commander determines the forces, tactics, methods, procedures and communications to be employed in providing this support (JP 0-2 2001, III-4). This is very important to consider when this relationship is used vice OPCON for instance, when a headquarters may alter the task organization that is under its operational control. The supporting unit determines the size, composition, and procedures to accomplish the support, instead of having it dictated. This has been an issue with both SOF and conventional units requesting *forces*, rather than stating the *effects* desired. An example of this came from a former JSOTF commander in OIF who had an SF team TACON to a conventional maneuver brigade. The brigade commander told his SF liaison that he wanted AC-130 gunship support to destroy a building from where his unit was receiving continuous mortar fire. The SF liaison instead coordinated for a sniper



team to provide precision fires during limited visibility and neutralized the mortar threat achieving the same desired effect, while sparing destruction of the building (Colonel David Morris, interview, 14 October 2004).

As mentioned earlier, the primary research question leads to several secondary and tertiary questions that must be answered. First, What current doctrine does exist with regards to SOF and conventional force integration and how does this affect C2, roles and missions, and battlespace at the operational and tactical levels? To examine what effect integration has on these key elements, this paper will examine current operations, and look at the practical application across full spectrum operations. Is the C2 architecture appropriate not only for integration with the appropriate levels of war, but how does it effect offense, defense, stability and support operations?

As stated earlier, the US military has been quite successful integrating joint and combined arms in achieving synergistic effects resulting in decisive victory in war. But military operations other than war encompasses peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, nation assistance, counter drug, counterinsurgency, up to and including combat operations. To further illustrate this point, LTG William Wallace the former commander of V Corps during OIF, stated that he suspected the Iraqi center of gravity shifted from Saddam Hussein and his regime in late April or early May 2003, to the Iraqi populace. In effect, from major theater war to stability operations in order to resolve conflict (FM 3-0 2001, 1-15). Conventional forces are quite well equipped at conducting major theater war, but SOF organizations are most often deployed in support of smaller scale contingencies, and peacetime military engagements.

As a case study in integration, this thesis will light on the relationship between the JSOTF-N and 173rd Airborne Brigade during OIF and ask how possible lapses in doctrine affected the joint planning effort, C2, battlespace, and roles and mission considerations. The 173rd Airborne Brigade's jump into northern Iraq was a far cry from its original concept of operation. The 173rd was originally to be attached to the 4th ID, providing a versatile and highly capable infantry unit to the most modernized mechanized force in the world. But when Turkey refused the US permission to move the 4th ID through its territory, United States European Command (USEUCOM) ordered the 173rd to plan an airborne operation into Iraq under the operational control of the combined forces special operations component command (CFSOCC) (Fontenot 2004, 223). Further subordinating the 173rd to the JSOTF-N marked another first in the integration of SOF and conventional forces during OIF. The conventional forces gave the JSOTF-N commander the ability to seize and retain ground, something SOF teams are inherently unable to do. Further, the 173rd served as a highly visible indicator of US presence and resolve- reassuring the Kurds (Fontenot 2004, 224). As it stands, the two organizations accomplished all assigned tasks through a thoroughly professional and truly cohesive effort. However, friction beyond that common to all integrated organizations under the tension of combat operations affected this unique pairing. Using doctrine, organization, training, materials, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) as an overlay this paper will examine both the successful and unsuccessful efforts of this relationship.

Possible limitations arise with the classification of information when studying recent combat operations, especially those involving SOF. In order for this thesis to remain unclassified, many of the details regarding this relationship may not lend

themselves to analysis, thus restricting the development of full robust conclusions. In an attempt to contend with these problems, the paper will attempt to capture the larger salient points in order to refrain from being a critique of the two unit's performances.

Conversely, this thesis will attempt to provide examples of successful integration of SOF and conventional forces on the modern battlefield that address the issues identified above. As an attempt to demonstrate how problems with integration were overcome, examples from OEF and OIF will be presented. Currently, SOF and conventional force AOs are either shared or overlapping and missions are being conducted jointly, further underscoring that these two organizations coordinate far beyond just deconfliction and anti-fratricide measures. Immediate examples include the attempted capture of Qusay and Uday Hussein, where a conventional force, the 101st Airborne worked in conjunction with SOF in a classic cordon and search effort. Additionally, the successful capture of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was conducted by elements of the 4th Infantry Division and SOF again executing cordon and search techniques (Carty 2003, 5). These operations define true integration, "the act or process of making whole or entire" (*Merriam-Websters* 2003, available online) and showcase how two disparate forces sought to apply effects on the same target (Jackson 2003, 4).

Another area for examination is to determine if the problem between the two organizations is endemic due to a perceived "competition" for missions. Until the advent of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), in 1986 by decree of the Goldwaters-Nichols Act, which also directed the services to begin collaboration on joint doctrine, SOF was largely dependent on conventional forces for support and

relegated exclusively as a supporting force. Army SF did not even become its own branch until 1987, with officers and non-commissioned officers often crossing back and forth between conventional and SF units during the tenure of their service. As historical precedence, The Son Tay Raid in November 1970 made a daring raid on a North Vietnamese prisoner of war camp thirty miles from Hanoi in order to rescue nearly one hundred US captives thought to be held there. This mission required extensive conventional US Air Force (USAF) and US Navy aviation support for this SOF raiding force. Ten years later, Operation Eagle Claw in 1980 to rescue hostages at the American Embassy in Tehran, Iran also required conventional USAF fixed wing, and United States Marine Corps (USMC) helicopter pilots. Operation Urgent Fury in 1983 saw SOF including Rangers, SEALs, SF, and other units invade Grenada, a miniscule island, with conventional forces in the form of a battalion landing team from the USMC, and two infantry battalions from the Army's 82d Airborne all vying in effect for the same mission; rescue of American medical university students. Operation Desert Storm utilized SOF for not much more than strategic reconnaissance, and 'Scud hunting' as a shaping operation for the decisive ground maneuver forces. Surprisingly, the premier light infantry force in the US Army, the 75th Ranger Regiment, which is capable of employment against both conventional and special operations targets deployed only one rifle company and a battalion C2 element for Desert Storm. Little if any integration or coordination of SOF and conventional forces was present during this conflict, which showcased the relative importance the US Central Command (USCENTCOM) commander placed on their role. The question begs deeper analysis as doctrine by definition reflects a body of principles based on a system of belief or an established

opinion. Does an institutional separation of the conventional forces from SOF based on traditionally held beliefs embed itself in doctrine? The answer lies somewhere between lack of understanding capabilities and roles, the self inflicted doctrinal shortcomings, and perceived competition not only for missions, but also funding. Further examples of the attitudinal chasm will be discussed, with possible doctrinal solutions to this problem.

Lastly, are current trends at the combat training centers (Joint Readiness Training Center, National Training Center, and Combat Maneuver Training Center) and the battle command training program (BCTP) adequately addressing the COE in order to institutionalize lessons learned from the battlefield, and further prepare units scheduled for combat tours in these areas of responsibility? The combat training centers (CTCs) tailor their training to accomplish the training goals of each visiting unit based on their METL. Normally, these exercises are two to three weeks in length, and pending availability, are normally preceded by a SOF unit being inserted into the battlefield three to five days prior to a conventional unit's arrival. Traditionally, there was little if any integration between the two organizations during this training. Part of this research will involve contacting the plans/exercises maneuver control elements of the CTCs to determine what they have injected into training beyond unit METL scenarios that enforce SOF integration. Each of the CTCs also have a leader training program whose mission is to coach, teach, and mentor brigade and battalion staffs on the military decision making process, and integrate current tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) from the contemporary operating environment (COE).

Coincidentally, is the BCTP adapting its training program to incorporate SOF planning at the corps, division, and brigade level? Each fiscal year, the BCTP at Ft.

Leavenworth, Kansas, has the ability to conduct fourteen division-level and fourteen brigade-level rotations, and eight corps or division headquarters designated as an ARFOR. A BCTP rotation consists of events that plan the training through execution of a warfighter command post exercise aimed at training staffs, and conclude with an after action review. Critical to C2 integration is joint planning at the theater level down to the tactical level. As the CTCs address tactical planning and execution, the BCTP should also ensure the overlap at the operational to tactical level is occurring.

Sometimes capabilities exceed doctrine, but TTP integration is one of the main thrusts of these training centers and should be injected into training now until doctrine catches up. Candid, feasible solutions to training and education will be presented to further facilitate SOF and conventional force integration.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

As the primary question for this thesis concerns itself with the possibilities of improving current doctrine with regards to SOF and conventional force integration, a large portion of the published works lending themselves for review will be joint publications and field manuals. These publications will provide the foundation for operations, mission command and control, planning and orders, logistics, and intelligence considerations for conventional forces and how they relate to coordination and integration. The joint electronic library will provide a wealth of information regarding joint doctrine through JPs, the DOD Dictionary, service and history publications, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, and Commander, Joint Chiefs of Staff directives.

To cite a specific example, JP 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, is the starting point for this thesis, and is the foundation to govern the joint activities and performance of the armed forces of the United States in joint operations. More specifically, it defines the fundamentals of joint warfare with regards to unified action, the levels of warfare, and command relationships. It also provides the general concepts for planning joint operations, and considerations for war and military operations other than war in a joint environment. Another superior reference, FM-3-31.1 *Army and Marine Corps Integration in Joint Operations*, has an excellent table of contents detailing critical areas such as typical task organization of Army and Marine Corps units, fundamentals of integration, terminology, liaison requirements, communications architecture, and integrated fire

support operations. This FM could serve as a possible example or template for SOF and conventional integration.

An Army field manual useful for research is FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, which details not only the employment of special forces but the doctrinal requirement for the levels of liaison consistent with conventional forces headquarters size, and the responsibilities inherent therein. Interestingly, this FM considers SF to be mostly in a supporting role when interacting with conventional forces, and sees it solely an SF responsibility for liaison.

Doctrine is based partly on assumptions, and must be validated through application during combat, or other real-world operations. This thesis will primarily focus on the contemporary operating environment and the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq for case studies and validation. Unfortunately, there are not many published works with regards to operations in OEF or OIF that are relevant to this topic. One outstanding source of information however, is *On Point: the United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* which provides an overall picture for the joint special operations areas (JSOAs) in Iraq, and is an extremely valuable document with regards to timelines, order of battle, command and control relationships, unit objectives and missions, and also has useful vignettes. Another excellent source of detailed information regarding the first year of combat operations in Afghanistan is *Weapon of Choice, U.S. Army Special Operations Forces in Afghanistan*. This book published by the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, reports minutely and distinctly on the initial campaign planning for OEF, the transition to integrate conventional forces during Operation Anaconda to include an overall conventional force commander, and



summarizes with observations and reflections offering tremendous insight into the execution of this war in this theater.

General Tommy Franks' recently published work, *American Soldier*, gives useful insight from the CENTCOM commander's perspective of operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and sheds light on his vision and the planning focus for SOF and conventional force objectives in both AORs. Of particular interest are General Franks' handwritten notes that include a synchronization matrix with the lines of operation and slices that focused his planners on how he envisioned the priorities for targeting during the invasion of Iraq. The lines included operational fires, SOF operations, operational maneuver (conventional forces), and unconventional warfare/support opposition groups that would be used to effect the 'slices', or the elements that kept Hussein in power. The 'slices' or instruments of national power included leadership, regime intelligence, Republican Guard/Special Republican Guard forces, and civilian population to name only a few. What is clearly reiterated time and again in *American Soldier* is Franks' reliance on joint warfare at the operational level, and the importance he placed on SOF in both OEF and OIF.

On the other end of the spectrum with regards to the tactical level of war is Robin Moore's *The Hunt for Bin Laden*. While this work's primary focus is on SOF operations in Afghanistan, it does cite candid and specific examples of SOF and conventional force integration, and provides information that at the company and team level, leaders are deconflicting and integrating of their own accord in the absence of clearer guidance. However, they are still hindered by issues of unfamiliarity and organizational culture differences between the two.

As a general historical account and possible different perspective of OIF, MG (ret) Robert Scales *The Iraq War* gives a brief consideration of SOF operations, with a dedicated annex titled *The Northern and Special Operations Campaign*, which details the AO, mission, and tasks assigned to Task Force Viking. This task force, whose headquarters was provided by the 10th Special Forces Group, had under its control either tactically or operationally the 173rd Airborne Brigade, Task Force 1-63rd Armor (1st Infantry Division), 2-15th Field Artillery Headquarters (10th Mountain Division), and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Clearly, this was a unique command and control structure and this book outlines the missions of this task force, jokingly referred to as a “kluge” by Colonel Charles Cleveland the JSOTF-N commander. Additionally, there are several articles from *Joint Special Operations Insights*, *Joint Force Quarterly*, and *Special Warfare*, which provide lessons learned and helpful vignettes to further define SOF and conventional force integration.

As a result from the researcher’s attendance at a Joint Training and Evaluation seminar tasked with writing a SOF and conventional force liaison handbook held at MacDill Air Force Base in October of 2004, several personal contacts were made. These contacts include former JSOTF commanders, operational detachment-alpha (ODA) commanders, SF company commanders, as well as US Air Force special operations personnel with COE experience willing to be interviewed on this topic. Also present at this conference was a representative from the US Army Infantry Center and School who has been charged with gathering lessons learned from OEF and OIF regarding this topic, and has been an extremely informative source of information via electronic mail. Additionally, the personal contacts made while the researcher was assigned to the 173rd

Airborne Brigade and as a liaison officer has yielded an interview with an operations officer and an intelligence officer who both served in the 173rd while TACON to JSOTF-N, and also an operations officer at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School who is charged with the training curriculum of army special forces candidates.

Lastly, the researcher has contacted the operations group, as well as the special operations training detachment at the joint readiness training center (JRTC) as they are responsible for the planning, execution, observing, and controlling for each unit rotation. The JRTC has undergone major changes within the last eighteen months, and operates on an OIF template to better prepare units for combat missions in the COE. These contacts will provide highlights from recent unit rotations with regards to SOF and conventional force integration, to include planning and execution of missions at the tactical level.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will begin by briefly addressing the roles, capabilities, limitations, and core tasks of SOF. For the purposes of brevity and the applicability to this paper, the writer will not address the missions of conventional forces across the land, naval, and air components, as this would require extensive and unnecessary attention considering the audience. As a conventional forces officer with limited exposure to SOF prior to operational experience gained from an integrative relationship, I include this in my thesis only as a starting point in order to more clearly define the smallest component command in the Department of Defense (DOD).

When the acronym SOF is used in this paper, it will be an inclusive term comprising US Army special forces, rangers, aviation, civil affairs, psychological operations, support personnel, and their weapon systems; US Air Force fixed and rotary wing aircraft and crews and special tactics personnel; and US Navy special warfare personnel, both SEAL teams and maritime platforms and crews. SOF offer a unique capability that has strategic ramifications, while primarily executed at the tactical level by small, sometimes clandestine forces. Further distinguishing them from conventional forces is that they are often designed and conducted to influence the will and/or leadership and/or populations to create conditions favorable to US strategic aims or objectives (JP 3.05 2001, vii). Alternatively, special operations may be principally offensive in nature, of high physical and political risk, and directed at high value, oftentimes sensitive targets (JP 3.05 2001, vii).

SOF must not be considered as a substitute for conventional forces, for quite clearly there is a vast array of tasks that could not be accomplished by SOF, mostly across the offensive and defensive spectrum of operations. They are, however, uniquely trained, organized, and equipped to accomplish nine core tasks: direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, counter-terrorism, psychological operations (PSYOP), civil affairs operations, counter-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and information operations (JP 3.05 2001, vii).

It must be stressed that SOF are inherently joint, require intense tactical level planning, may require extensive cultural and language skills, use sophisticated means of communication systems, and frequently require a high degree of discriminate and precise use of force (JP 3.05 2001, vii). The evolution of SOF, coupled with the post 11 September 2001 COE, has led to what were once two disparate forces parallel in purpose, but rarely close in geographic battle space, to integrate physically as well as ideologically. This paper will not suggest that conventional forces should absorb, control, or subordinate SOF, nor vice-versa. Rather, although they are on separate lines of operation, the effects desired require a synergistic effort so as to avoid an exploitable seam by an ever-wary adversary.

During the research process, the problem statement led me to explore beyond purely doctrinal references in search of clarification. Thorough reviews of numerous after action reports (AARs) from OEF and OIF regarding SOF and conventional forces integration led me to believe that there are possible gaps not only in doctrine, but also in the organizational structure with regards to recent army transformation, training inadequacies at the CTCs, and non-commissioned officer and officer education system

professional development schools, as well as shortfalls in equipment to include radios and battle command systems (BCS), to name a few. What occurred was a natural gravitation towards a central tenet of army thinking, later adopted by the joint community, using the comprehensive system of identifying a solution using doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) imperatives. Using these as a construct in order to compartmentally highlight the identified shortfalls compared to requirements of integration, streamlined my research methodology. This mental model is used unilaterally across the DOD to identify those factors which drive the need for change. Sometimes our capabilities exceed our abilities to properly integrate and plan for their synergistic effects in our operations.

As the research for this thesis began with examining doctrinal ramifications of the conventional force and SOF integration issue, there is a considerable amount of documentation covering this. The methodology used to examine doctrine will be to identify an issue taken from recent lessons learned in the COE, reference the current doctrinal publication that supports the issue, and determine if an improvement is necessary. The most important factor is to then define a recommended improvement derived from a concept of operations, or a TTP, and determine if it can be well defined so that the concepts can be employed easily and effectively within the existing force structure. Furthermore, any recommendations must be possible for two or more services through this joint operational concept or TTP to make even more efficient use of the concept. Lastly, any impacts on existing or developing service and/ or joint doctrine that this concept is likely to impact must be defined.

The next facet of the DOTMLPF that provides the framework for my research methodology is the organizational impacts on the DOD. History is rife with examples in organizational changes that led to dramatic breakthroughs in warfighting capabilities; Napoleon's use of independent corps formations and the application of combined arms operations by Germany during World War II are but two examples.

While the primary question of this thesis examines doctrinal impacts, the secondary question concerns itself with the impacts of integration upon command and control, joint fires, and logistics at the operational and tactical levels. Are there organizational concerns or issues regarding these battlefield operational systems when conventional forces and SOF integrate? Using the same method for the doctrinal examination, this paper will cite successful examples of operational concepts and TTP, and then determine if these concepts will lead to a more effective or efficient operation in the warfighting structure. Conversely, the concept must not complicate either organization.

A determination of institutionalized training is the next component that will be examined, and this will also aid in answering the secondary question regarding command and control, joint fires, and logistics, as well as tertiary questions about the trends at the army's battle command training program (BCTP) and the combat training centers (CTCs) addressing the COE. A brief exploration into the officer and non-commissioned officer education system will also examine how conventional forces are being instructed with regards to SOF, and conversely, what SOF candidates are taught with regards to capabilities and limitations of conventional forces. Are leaders being made aware of the

roles and missions of each force, or are they left to discover each other's capabilities in war time situations?

In the absence of war, the mission of the military is to prepare for the rigors associated with combat. As stated in FM 7-0, *Train the Force*, "We train the way we fight because our historical experiences show the direct correlation between realistic training and success on the battlefield" (FM 7-0 2002, 1-1). Does the military's institutionalized training support this concept as it applies to the COE? With regards to lessons learned with conventional force and SOF integration, this thesis will examine what training is deficient and what is needed. Furthermore, a necessary determination must be made if the training can be provided at a reasonable cost, and what changes in current training will be required to implement this strategy.

The tools of war are what allow US forces to leverage their superior training when applied to sound doctrinal concepts to defeat its enemies on the field of battle. The materials with which the country has outfitted its fighting forces have been the decisive factor in twentieth century warfare, from the "arsenal of democracy" which overwhelmed the Germans and Japanese in World War II, to the utter dominance displayed by US air forces, coupled with the armored and mechanized forces in the Gulf War of 1991. It is commonly accepted that the US enjoys global superiority over its enemies and potential adversaries with regards to its weapons and military equipment. This might lead one to believe that material issues with regards to conventional forces and SOF integration is practically nonexistent.

The analysis in the following chapter will highlight real examples of material issues as they impact integration, determine if it is an anomaly, and lastly offer a possible



solution to a perceived material deficit. Incorporated within this is the responsibility to determine if any material solution fits into the planned operational architecture, if it is interoperable, and lastly if it is a force multiplier.

Leadership impacts upon everything within the DOD; it is the intangible and subjective element that relies on sound judgment based upon training, experience, morals, and ethics. The influence of this decisive element of combat power upon the integration of conventional forces with SOF is clearly the most compelling facet of this thesis.

As previously eluded to, integration of combat forces has had its champions vastly outnumbered by those who found its concepts not only objectionable, but also nearly profane. The inter-war period from 1919 until 1939 saw the most controversial era in modern military history with regards to innovative leaders attempting to apply lessons learned from the First World War. With the likes of Billy Mitchell advocating not only strategic bombing but also “ground support aviation,” J. F. C. Fuller extolling the virtues of combining ground maneuver elements of infantry and armor, and Major Earl H. Ellis envisioning the concepts for US amphibious warfare doctrine (Murray and Millet 1996, 73). All were met at one time or another with staunch criticism, and Brigadier General Mitchell even faced a court-martial and was found guilty of insubordination (Murray and Millet 1996, 107). Each of these innovative thinkers studied his profession intensely and had witnessed either first hand, or analyzed with an unbiased view the successes and failures of the previous war. A return to the senseless destruction and nearly incalculable human suffering whose impetus was the stale and perceived venerable concepts held so tightly by senior officers and politicians who viewed change as unnecessary, and even dangerous, was unacceptable. It is of interest that history remembers chiefly the

successful groundwork of these selfless, joint, and integrative thinkers and not their critics.

Leaders are burdened with the responsibility of understanding what concepts are of value to advocate, which will aid in decision making, and which will enable a more effective and efficient use of the force structure. Cultural bias and ‘legacy’ thinking must not interfere with combat tested and proven concepts and TTPs. History demonstrates that to overcome inertia with regards to military innovation, leaders must not seek the benefits of their own service, branch, or area of concern, but rather should evaluate the overall measure of effectiveness of the concept. This thesis will attempt to show how possible cultural bias has affected conventional force and SOF integration, and why this is the most difficult, as well as the most important hurdle to overcome.

The impacts on personnel and integration are less obvious. The approach the writer will take regarding this topic is to examine what fallouts occur with regards to military occupational skill sets (MOS), and the problems that arise when joint conventional force and SOF operations have differing concepts on levels of expertise, and differing authority to execute certain missions. A brief example is the ability to request close air support (CAS) from fixed wing attack aircraft. Currently, only a joint terminal attack controller (JTAC), or an air liaison officer (ALO) from the Air Force has the authority to control the delivery of air-to-ground munitions; conventional ground forces cannot, and a large majority of SOF personnel cannot. The only exception to this is emergency CAS, when no JTAC or ALO is available. The writer will cite examples from operations in OEF and OIF where this caused friction, as well as near catastrophic results.

Any recommendation made with regards to personnel must demonstrate how it will help personnel do their jobs more effectively or more easily. Other considerations are the impact on personnel tempo, fostering of jointness, and furthering of interoperability, all of which make accomplishment of tasks and missions easier and more effective.

The last activity considered with regard to the impact of integration is the repercussions on existing facilities, or if there are any requirements to add or change existing ones. Using the logical DOTMLPF construct, an analysis of the previous facets might lead to a conclusion that existing infrastructures with regards to training integrated conventional forces and SOF, for instance, might require change. Do existing training facilities adequately enable integrated training, and why not? An example of this need for adequate facilities is the US Army's decision in 1989 to move the desert phase of training for its Ranger Course from Dugway Proving Grounds, Utah, to a far better existing one near Fort Bliss, Texas. The driving factors behind this decision were a suitable airfield, a larger training area, modern barracks, adequate dining facilities, as well as schooling, housing, and quality of life for the training cadre's families. A major factor in recommending changes, or additions to existing facilities is obviously a cost-benefit analysis. Will the recommendation significantly improve integration so as to justify expenditure? What are the impacts if facilities are not improved? Obviously, they must be significant to warrant such measures.

A central tenet to army thinking and later adopted by the joint community is the DOTMLPF imperative. It allows one to view requirements for change critically and comprehensively (Fastabend and Simpson 2004, 2). The methodology will reflect a critical account taken from lessons learned and after action reviews from the COE. After

determining if there is a requirement for improvement, a recommendation will proceed.

Lastly, the author will present the relationship of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and JSOTF-

N as a case study and utilize the same DOTMLPF construct.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

This chapter will explore all aspects that affect the doctrinal underpinnings of joint integration between conventional forces and SOF. As previously stated in chapter 3, doctrine is a key facilitator with regards to C2, joint fires, and logistics at the operational and tactical levels, but issues involving integration affect more than doctrine, and have significant impact upon the BOS. While doctrine is the system of principles that governs and regulates the armed forces in peacetime and wartime operations, uncertainties, human errors, the unseen, equipment failures, etc. all affect human morale, decisions, and actions in combat (Dr. Thomas M. Huber, lecture, 1 February 2005). This is the friction of war, and doctrine is not the only concept challenged when faced with the chaotic conditions of combat. Therefore, the analysis is subdivided into seven subsections that make up the DOTMLPF construct. Each section will be defined with the current existing programs or concepts, and then an instance or issue from the COE will be juxtaposed to this in order to highlight possible inefficiencies.

Lastly, the writer will present what was at the time a unique pairing of conventional force and SOF integration, the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the JSOTF-N in OIF as a case study also utilizing the DOTMLPF as an analytical tool.

#### Doctrine

As stated in the Joint Doctrine Capstone and Keystone Primer, “Military doctrine presents fundamental principles that guide the employment of forces. Joint doctrine provides authoritative guidance based upon extant capabilities of the Armed Forces of the

United States.” (CJCS 2001, 2). What must be made clear from the beginning of this analysis is that conventional force and SOF integration is a joint issue, not singular service, and it is not a unique happenstance. It is ongoing and quite common in the COE, and operational and tactical commanders and planners are living this reality daily. As stated above, doctrine is principles to be used as a guide; it is not infallible and certainly may be revisited and updated as necessary. With regards to joint doctrine, it provides a basis for the integrated and synchronized application of those unique capabilities within the Armed Forces. Conventional force and SOF integration is not what it once used to be, that is the engagement of enemy forces by a series of individual actions linked by a common theme. The post 11 September COE has changed how the Armed Forces of the United States operates, and missions and scope of responsibility have changed as well.

Since its establishment in 1987, the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has performed the role of a supporting command to all the geographic combatant commands. However, the dynamics of the war on terrorism (WOT) continue to change how the United States employs its armed forces. In light of this and the vital role SOF have played in combating and defeating terrorism, in May 2004, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) presented a report to Congress titled *The Changing Roles of the USSOCOM*. It is important to begin the analysis of doctrine with this report to Congress in order to capture the most recent doctrinal changes and how they effect integration.

This report, pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2004, expanded the role of the USSOCOM, which has emerged as the lead combatant command for the DOD efforts to pursue the WOT (DOD 2004, 4). The excerpt below,

taken from *The Changing Roles of the USSOCOM*, clearly shows how USSOCOM has shifted its focus:

The mission of the U.S. Special Operations Command is expanding to planning and coordinating the counterterrorist missions and campaigns against terrorist networks around the world, and executing those missions as the supported command while maintaining the role of force provider to and supporter of the geographic combatant commands for other missions. Working with the Office of Secretary Defense, the Command is now executing its first priority-leading the global war on terrorism. (DOD 2004, 5)

Whereas SOF were traditionally an asset for the geographic combatant commander or a joint task force (JTF) commander to aid in the accomplishment of his mission, SOF are now focusing on their directed primary mission as lead in the WOT. This will allow USSOCCOM improved support to planning and directing combating terrorism operations, preserving readiness, and transforming SOF to more agile, adaptive, and responsive warriors (DOD 2004, 9).

This revolutionary directive will reorganize USSOCCOM to function as a supported combatant command for planning and executing operations. This designation allows for centralized planning on a global scale across the boundaries of the geographic commands, expanding options for mission execution and permits more flexible command relationships (DOD 2004, 14).

The traditional dynamic has shifted away from major conventional war conducted through standard offensive and defensive operations by conventional forces, supported by SOF to accomplish specialized tasks to achieve the decisive victory. Now, enemies of the US are non-nation-state threats, warriors but not professional soldiers waging insurgent warfare with guerilla tactics, who accumulate like rain clouds and disperse just as easily. Conventional forces train extensively for major conventional war and less so for

MOOTW. Small-scale contingencies have been the realm of SOF, where combating terror, FID, peace enforcement, arms control, and limited combat operations, such as raids and strikes have been their expertise. This new directive recognizes what Martin Van Creveld foresaw in 1991 in his work *The Transformation of War*, where he states large-scale warfare between states, fought by armies separate from populations, was on its way out (Blyth 2004, 78). To put this into perspective, conventional forces' exposure to SOF will no longer be limited to small teams operating in their AOR, whose actions must be merely deconflicted through a special operations command and control element (SOCCE). Rather, it may be the conventional forces who are operating as a supporting force in a JSOA. If, as defined, doctrine is the principles that guide the employment of forces, then surely this recent directive by the OSD will be important to keep in mind throughout this analysis.

### Command and Control

The very cornerstone of integration is clear, unambiguous C2, and unity of command is central to unity of effort. The authority vested in a commander must be proportionate with the responsibility assigned to ensure he is not overburdened, nor himself overbearing on his subordinate forces. In *Command in War*, Martin Van Creveld states that effective organizations are task-organized at the lowest level into self-contained units to accomplish complex tasks. Leaders of these organizations are further empowered with the authority to make decisions at the lowest level. Van Creveld's argument suggests that for disparate units operating on a modern battlefield, the integration of C2 functions must match the level at which they are physically integrated.



According to JP 0-2, *Unified Action*, integration is defined as “the arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole” (GL-7). This concept seems simple enough to understand, as the armed forces integrate routinely among fundamentally different units to accomplish assigned missions. This is more commonly referred to as task organization. Army units depend on Air Force personnel and aircraft for mobility, as well as fires, in joint operations, and within ground forces the infantry, field artillery, and engineers all integrate under a single commander in combined arms operations to generate effects on the same target, supported by logistics functions to maintain momentum. The above are examples of physical integration as they relate to the application of various forces, which inherently requires an integrated C2 function as well. It should be emphasized that there are two forms of integration: physical integration, and integration of C2. The physical integration requires the C2 piece in order to function correctly.

To help illustrate this point, consider an example regarding a ground force requesting CAS; the ground force has a physically integrated joint terminal air controller (JTAC) operating with the unit who intimately understand the commander’s intent, as he has been a part of planning and rehearsals. The exact number of CAS sorties has been delegated well in advance to the ground commander, leaving no ambiguity; type of ordnance and time on station are all coordinated well in advance. Furthermore, satisfactory communications exist among the ground units, the JTAC, and the aircraft on station.

Currently, conventional forces have the ability to employ CAS at the battalion task force level, and no lower. For the sake of argument, what if a task force had to

employ CAS at a level lower than battalion level? Consider Afghanistan during Operation Anaconda in late February 2002, when the Coalition Joint Task Force (CJTF) commander Major General Hagenbeck, stated that this was a “platoon fight led by platoon leaders” and that the Air Force did not have enough ETACs “in their inventory to support every ground maneuver element” in the fight (McElroy 2002, 9). Hagenbeck cited the example of an ETAC who was extracted after the first day, and until the controller returned, “not even the battalion commander could call in precision guided munitions” (McElroy 2002, 9). It was during this operation that an infantry company commander waited two days for CAS to destroy an enemy mortar position that had been harassing his unit, as he had to relay his request through his battalion headquarters (Grant 2003, 2). The results of not having assigned Air Force tactical control parties below the battalion level proved to have dire consequences in a combat environment. The lack of necessary integrated C2 prevented the combined effects of Army and Air Force assets on a single target. The need for responsive fires in this instance proves that the requirements exceeded the capability to generate the necessary effects due to inadequate integration.

The above example relates to a seemingly similar issue with regards to conventional forces and SOF. The problem is to ensure that the echelon at which C2 integration occurs is consistent with the level of physical integration (Van Creveld 1987, 268).

In light of this, consider the C2 architecture in OEF from November 2001 to December 2002, where the headquarters responsible to integrate conventional forces and SOF remained at the joint forces level (Brown 2003, 20). Briefly, USCENTCOM headquarters remained in Tampa, Florida, and tasked the US Army, Central Command

(ARCENT) to provide C2 for Army forces less SOF as the CFLCC (Brown 2003, 20).

Yet tactical integration of both forces was occurring regularly during this period, and the integration of C2 remained echelons above.

A further analysis of doctrine should lend insight as to why this structure was utilized during the first year of OEF. JP 0-2 outlines the doctrine and policy for joint C2, and further details command relationships. The Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF) states that one of the tenets for joint C2 is robust integration, synchronization, and coordination mechanisms.

Integration is achieved through joint operation planning and the skillful assimilation of forces, capabilities, and systems to enable their employment in a single, cohesive operation rather than a set of operations. A synchronization matrix may be employed to visually portray critical actions that must be accomplished by multiple elements of the joint force. Coordination is achieved through the exchange of liaisons. (JP 0-2 2001, III-15)

As the Army and Air Force have established mutually agreed upon C2 relationships and integration for the employment of CAS, what doctrine exists for conventional forces and SOF integration, to include doctrine for liaison? Currently there exists no joint publication exclusively detailing consideration for the integration of forces, nor is there any joint doctrine regarding specific functions, duties, and responsibilities of liaison. What does exist relating to this topic however, is FM 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, which echoes joint doctrine with regards to command relationships, and has an annex dedicated to liaison. What this annex provides is the fundamentals of liaison, responsibilities, and practices. It also addresses recommended rank for the echelon at which liaison is required, for instance, the recommended rank for liaison with a corps level organization is major; a captain is recommended for a division-level organization, and so forth. This is a useful annex when

conventional forces are integrating or operating with one another, but mentions nothing of SOF. As conventional units are now finding themselves in a supporting relationship to SOF, what size liaison element and with what rank does a conventional battalion send to coordinate with a JSOTF, for instance? What is the SOF equivalent to a battalion? It is not an unprecedented occurrence if one considers the mission of task force 1st battalion of the 87th infantry, 10th Mountain Division (Light) (TF1-87) during the initial months of OEF, as they were OPCON to JSOTF-N (called task force DAGGER) in Karshi Kanabad to provide security and a quick reaction force in south Uzbekistan (Moore 2003, 59). Currently, there is no doctrinal template for conventional forces to execute liaison functions with SOF.

Conversely, as SOF have traditionally been in a supporting role to conventional forces, JP 3-05, *Doctrine for Joint Special Operations*, identifies the SOCCE as the focal point for synchronization of SOF activities with conventional force operations (JP 3-05 2003, III-10). This element performs C2 or liaison functions according to mission requirements and as directed by the establishing SOF commander; furthermore, its level of authority and responsibility may widely vary (JP 3-05 2003, III-10). The SOCCE is usually task-organized around an SF company headquarters and supports a corps-level organization. Other SOF liaison officers (LNOs) are mentioned as required to help aid in mission execution, prevention of fratricide, targeting, and coordination of fire support, but doctrine does not specify the level of coordination. For instance, what should a conventional brigade commander expect with regards to an LNO if he has been notified that a joint mission is to occur with SOF in his AOR? As joint doctrine is ambiguous

regarding coordination below the corps level, an examination of Army SF doctrine is required.

FM 100-25, *Doctrine for Army Special Operations Forces*, addresses liaison below the corps level as the responsibility of the special forces liaison element (SFLE), that is, an SF or joint special operations element that conducts liaison between US conventional forces division-level headquarters and is formed only as needed (2001, 4-59). Usually this is a two-to-eight man element from an ODA used to provide a coordination link with conventional forces, which provides the same information as the SOCCE but does not have any C2 capability (FM 3-05.20 2004, App B). Clearly, this element is used primarily for deconfliction and coordination, not C2. How does this support a noncontiguous and nonlinear battlefield?

Take, for instance, Afghanistan, a country the size of Texas, with rugged and unforgiving terrain spiked with mountain peaks exceeding 12,000 feet in some areas. Such terrain forced CJTF Mountain in the spring of 2002 to locate the 3rd Brigade 101st Airborne Division (TF Rakassan) at Kandahar airport, and TF 1-87 at Bagram airport, some 275 miles apart. On 1 March 2002, a SOCCE from the Army's 5th Special Forces Group (SFG) was replaced with an SFLE from the Army National Guard's 19th SFG at Kandahar airport, the location of TF Rakassan (Briscoe and Kiper 2003, 277). This was the same day Operation Anaconda began, and a liaison element that had not participated in the planning or rehearsals for the largest joint operation of the war was entrusted to deconflict the actions of three other SOF task forces with a conventional force. It must also be stressed that this SFLE was from the 19th SFG, and only 3rd and 5th SFG

soldiers were participating in the action. During this operation, an A-10 pilot recalled how during one nighttime CAS sortie he nearly committed fratricide on a SOF element:

The target was identified by airborne ISR assets and relayed to an ETAC on the ground attached to a battalion from the 10th Mountain. He was working with the information he had and believed there to be no friendlies forward of his position. Keep in mind this was not a linear battle, but had pockets of battles in different locations which makes it difficult to blue force track. Even though he had no reason to believe these were friendlies, he did not feel right about it which eventually led him to abort me. . . . In my opinion there were several issues which caused this situation, but mainly this was a SOF mature AO with recent army arrival, and the SOF personnel were used to doing things a certain way without much coordination with the (conventional) army. (Maj Dave Clinton, interview 9 February 2005)

The ground tactical plan for Operation Anaconda called for conventional forces and SOF to be focused on the same tactical objective, in proximity measured in meters, with conventional forces a supporting effort to a SOF and Afghani force as the main effort. Yet the integration of C2 functions remained at the CJTF headquarters (Brown 2003, 9).

There is much evidence of integration between the two forces being handled through the use of TTP at the lowest levels. The art of tactics consists of three interrelated aspects: the creative and flexible array of means to accomplish assigned missions; decision making under conditions of uncertainty when faced with an intelligent enemy; and understanding the human dimension--the effects of combat on soldiers (FM 3-90 2001, 1-12). Techniques are the general, detailed methods troops and commanders use to perform assigned missions, specifically methods and functions. Procedures are the standard detailed courses of action that describe how to perform tasks (FM 3-90 2001, 1-13). In effect, in the apparent absence of adequate doctrine, forces are being asked to

utilize their creativity and flexibility to develop their own methods to execute detailed courses of action.

The adage that forces “fight as they train” is applicable; armies cannot afford to make everything up as they go (Ancker 2003, 20). Innovative and adaptive leaders have been the impetus for the development and implementation of effective doctrine for US forces throughout its history. This is important because the US has an immense array of capabilities at its disposal with regards to conventional and SOF integration. It is just as important, however, to note the numerous historical examples where the failure to turn innovation into effective doctrine led to nonsuccess, the British use of tanks at Cambrai in 1917, the Union failure at the Crater at Petersburg in 1864, and the US inability to couple mobility through helicopters to a corresponding strategy in Vietnam (Ancker 2003, 23).

### Organization

Today the US military finds itself at war (prosecuting campaigns) and transforming to meet the emerging challenges of the twenty-first century. On 17 September 2002, President George W. Bush released a new national security strategy (NSS) that acknowledges the need for the US to wield its strength and influence in the world to shape it for the better. Transformation for the DOD emerged as one of the key imperatives (AUSA 2003, 2). Speaking at the Citadel on 11 December 2001, the President stated, “What’s different today is our sense of urgency- the need to build this future force while fighting a present war. It’s like overhauling an engine while you’re going 80 miles an hour. Yet we have no other choice” (AUSA 2003, 3).

Presently the US Army is undergoing a most dramatic change to its organizational structure, while arguably being the lead force provider for the WOT. In terms of this transformation, the Army has labeled the current structure the “legacy force,” and the Stryker brigade combat teams its “interim force” the “future force” is the term used to identify the Army as it sees itself by the year 2014. The future force is designed to be echeloned with units of action (UA) and units of employment (UE), which roughly correspond to brigades and divisions--corps, respectively. The UA is a combined arms, close combat team that can be reinforced as needed for assigned tactical tasks. Designed to win engagements, it is capable of independent combat actions. The UE is intended to operate at either a higher tactical or at the operational level. There can be several UEs between a UA and combatant commander. Intended to be a combined arms, air-ground task force, a UE can operate as the Army forces (ARFOR) component or a JTF. These higher echelon UEs are also combined arms, air ground commands, and dislocate an enemy throughout the depth of the theater by disorganizing and disintegrating his systems (Hickey 2004, 8).

The impetus for this transformation results from a state of urgency, as stated by the president. This Army transformation began in 1999 under General Eric Shinseki, then Chief of Staff of the Army, to move away from a force built like that in Figure 1, following the relatively lengthy amount of time to deploy a combined arms brigade task force of some 5,000 troops to Albania for possible use in Kosovo (Daadler and O’Hanlon 2001, I). Slow to mass combat power coupled with a significant logistics support requirement, Task Force Hawk, as this ground force was named, became the rallying cry of organizational restructuring for Army leaders.



In contrast, the future force is to be modular and rapidly deployable, complete with all force multipliers and logistics enablers. The UA design, as shown in Figure 2, is to be manned, trained, and equipped for rapid close combat operations and defeating an enemy who is rather conventional, that is, one who is prepared to fight in an overt and organized way using sophisticated operations, tactics, and weapons (Hickey 2004, 37).

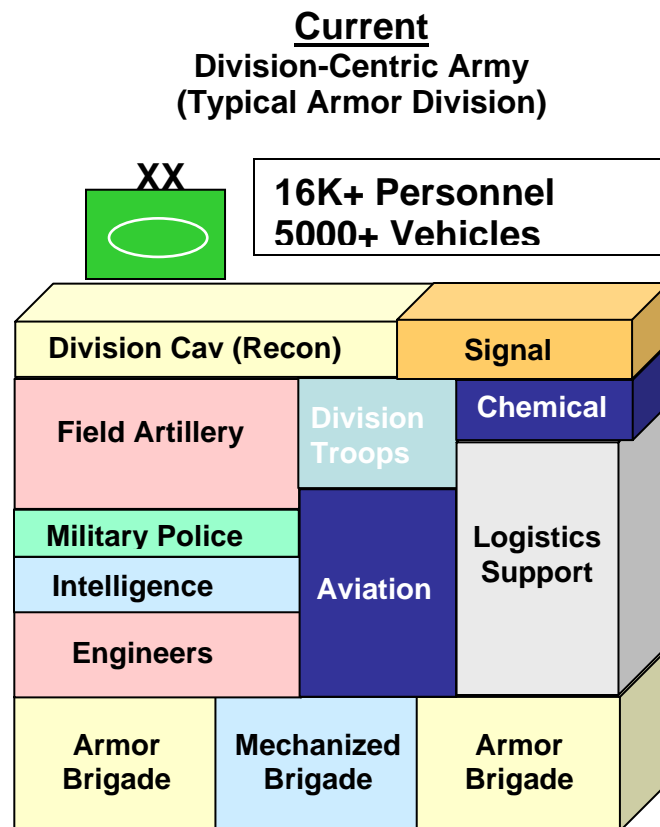


Figure 1. Division-Centric Army

*Source:* Lieutenant Colonel Ted Crisco, USA, Division-Centric, *The Modular Army* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Center, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate 11 August 2004, 11).

## Future Brigade-Centric Army (UEx with Modular UAs)

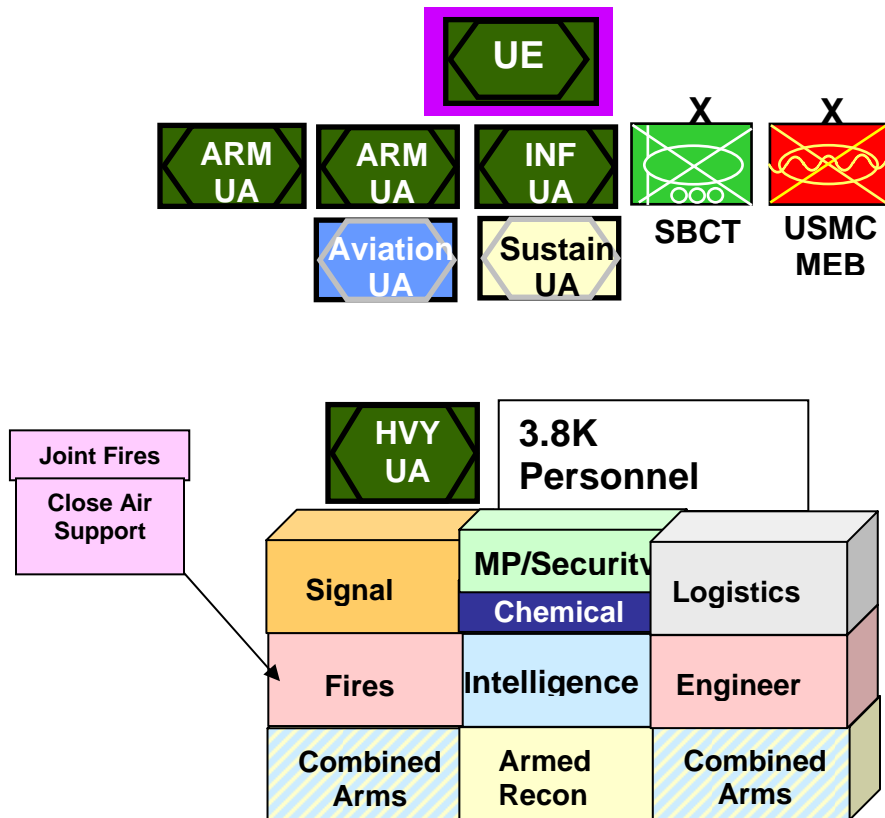


Figure 2. Brigade-Centric Army

Source: Lieutenant Colonel Ted Crisco, USA, Division-Centric, *The Modular Army* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Center, Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate 11 August 2004, 11).

Note the organizational structure of the Army division legacy force above in Figure 1, and the new UE and UA design in Figure 2, and then consider the implications of irregular or guerilla warfare. Further consider current stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and then refer to the UA capability statement. Since its inception,

the US has fought more of these guerilla and insurgency-type conflicts than conflicts between two standing armies. Yet the future force concept and, more specifically, the UA are designed for conventional major war, not what the US has historically faced and is currently facing today. The employment of a conventional force, in this case the UE or UA in an irregular conflict would not be the decisive means by which to execute a campaign (Hickey 2004, 38). The outcome of these conflicts is not decided by overwhelming combat power aimed at a decisive place and time. Rather, what is decisive in irregular or unconventional wars is the loyalty and support an insurgent group enjoys from the local population. True to Clausewitz' dogma that all wars are politics by other means, it is insurgencies in which politics most directly affect the ways and means of a campaign (Hickey 2004, 38).

Of utmost importance in insurgencies is the understanding of the political positions of the opposing forces, that is, the people, the insurgents, and the government; a subtle presence to influence and gather intelligence; and finally an appreciation of the opposition's capabilities with regards to the local terrain and weather conditions. This is not the work of a conventional force, which most likely will be construed as overbearing by the mere presence of heavily armed combat forces, but rather of SOF.

It is relevant to review the definition of UW in light of this;

A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed by an external source, during all conditions of war or peace. It includes guerilla warfare and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as the indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and escape and evasion. (FM 1-02 2004, 1-78)

The future force is an unequivocally offensively oriented force whose aim is rapid victory by dictating the nature, scope, and tempo of operations. The Army is now primarily conducting stability operations that most closely resemble FID, and in some instances UW, the UE or UA as currently configured cannot accomplish the decisive operations, that is, those involving civil affairs, PSYOP, or SF specialties. The organizational limitations of these forces are readily apparent; they are not structured to conduct full spectrum operations. What the UE and UA represents are the traditional forces associated with the high end spectrum of conflict along the BOS, defined in FM 7-15 as “the physical means (soldiers, organizations, and equipment) that commanders use to accomplish missions”(FM 7-15 2003, xiii). They include maneuver, fire support, air defense, command and control, intelligence, mobility and survivability, and combat service support (FM 7-15 2003, xiii).

In which BOS does SOF operate, and where does FID or UW occur within full spectrum operations? The question is not easily answered when delineating “operations” and “systems” in a conventional warfare mindset, which further detracts from the true integration of forces by the organizational omission of SOF from the future force concept. Operations akin to Desert Storm and OIF (from March until late April 2003) will occur less frequently than mid-to-low level conflicts; while the Army must still be able to fulfill its “nonnegotiable contract” of “fighting and winning our nation’s wars” as the decisive force for sustained land combat, it must view its transformation in terms of not only relative speed to deploy and fight, but also types of operations it must conduct (US Army, <http://www.army.mil/vision/Documents/The%20Army%20Vision.PDF>, last visited 30 January 2005).

Clearly, when one looks at the future force organizational concept and the construct of the UE and UA, it is plain to see that SOF are not represented. Yet unmistakably it is a joint-capable force by the inclusion of joint fires/CAS, inferring representation of the Air Force, and also the example of a marine expeditionary brigade under control of a UE headquarters for missions requiring their distinct capabilities. It is nearly inconceivable that SOF will not be required in joint operations with the future force, yet the organizational sovereignty does not consider their inclusion.

As highlighted in the *Doctrine* subchapter, the requirements of conventional force and SOF integration rely heavily on liaison. Doctrinally, SOF support the liaison with conventional forces by dictating a SOCCE at corps-level equivalent organizations, and the Army SF provide SFLEs to division-level organizations. Conventional forces, as shown, have limited doctrine to support this critical link. Organizationally, however, there exists no permanent duty position or billet within either organization's modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE).

SOF have doctrinally identified the size, scope of responsibilities, and C2 authority of these elements, but yet do not support them by establishing a permanent duty position and title by MTOE. One exception to this that must be mentioned is in regards to Rangers. The Army's 75th Ranger Regiment has created a specific duty position and title supported by its MTOE for an LNO team at regimental headquarters and within each of its three subordinate battalions.

Concurrently, liaison positions, although critical to the success of missions for conventional forces in joint, interagency, and multinational operations have no established permanent billets at the division- or brigade-level organizations (Military

Analysis Network, <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/army/unit/toe/index.html>, accessed 14 March 2005). This does not infer that LNOs are not exchanged between conventional forces and SOF in joint operations, but rather the personnel identified to fulfill these responsibilities are identified by their respective commands after being removed from their primary duties.

For example, an Army SF battalion is operating in the same AOR as a conventional division organization. The SF battalion commander must then identify an ODA to function as an SFLE to the conventional division commander, thereby reducing the number of forces in the field. Consider this example from early in OIF: “In fact, some entire ODAs (normally combat units) served as liaison teams. For example ODA 916 divided into three sections, simultaneously serving as Special Forces Liaison Element for 3rd ID Headquarters, 3rd Brigade of the 3rd ID, and 3-7 CAV” (Fontenot 2004, 405). Concurrently, the conventional division should task its subordinate brigades to provide liaison to the SF battalion as required when SOF are operating in its battle space to ensure unity of effort. What normally occurs, due to a lack of a permanent duty position, is a key staff member with operational planning experience is sent to provide temporary liaison to SOF.

*On Point*, the exhaustive and in-depth study of the US Army in OIF through 1 May 2003, provides this as a final observation regarding integration: “If the trend toward greater SOF and conventional force integration continues, generating, training, and equipping liaison teams will require effort and investment” (Fontenot 2004, 405). Inherent in this is an organizational overview to ensure liaison duty positions are created

to support this initiative, thereby relieving the commander of both conventional and SOF units to sacrifice critical personnel.

### Training

As illustrated, integration is a reality on the battlefields of the WOT; this is not a unique happenstance, but rather a dynamic that has now become routine. What must be embraced is the ability to prepare for the rigors of combat through planning and, most importantly, training. Conventional forces integrate across the combined arms spectrum during training events as the result of a thorough review of METL by commanders and their staffs to ensure relevance on the eve of combat. Likewise, SOF units usually conduct similar mission preparation and training with other SOF, but rarely integrate physically during a training event with conventional forces. What occurs is usually a training event coordinated by the United States Joint Forces Command or the BCTP, which directs planning, and employment for integration at the JTF level, with deconfliction and coordination left at the lower levels. As demonstrated, this is no longer the reality in the COE.

What is needed is an institutional look at training to ensure that TTP, and the invaluable lessons learned from operations over the last few years are incorporated and institutionalized. Failure to capture and implement these hard learned lessons is a failure of adaptation; training to old standards results in lack of preparedness, which is entirely unacceptable.

Arguably, most integration occurs between the land components (specifically the Army and Marine Corps) and SOF. Consider, however, the professional development of an Army armor officer from second lieutenant through lieutenant colonel, the curriculum

taught at the armor officer's basic course over a four-month period provides classes on small unit leadership, intensive study on tactics and doctrine for the employment of tank platoons, and an introduction to the other combat, support, and service and support branches that he will encounter. Throughout his development as a junior officer he will have no exposure to SOF (unless deployed to an operational environment), but he will work extensively with infantry, field artillery, engineers, communications, and all types of combat service support soldiers. When this same officer attends his captain's career course to prepare him for the rigors of company command and duties as a staff officer at the brigade and battalion levels, he will further hone his skills in the combined arms arena and learn to effectively plan for decisive land combat against a similar enemy, and coordinate across the BOS effectively (DA PAM 600-3-12 1987, 3).

As a captain, he will command a company or cavalry troop of approximately 70 to 150 soldiers and will serve in some capacity on a battalion- and or brigade-level equivalent staff. During this seven-year period, unless this captain deploys operationally, he will be only briefly exposed to civil affairs (CA) and PSYOP detachments or teams, and will be made somewhat aware of their capabilities. He will not integrate, plan, or train with SOF at any of the CTCs.

As a major, he will be given two two- hour blocks of instruction on SOF capabilities at the Command and General Staff College, and will for the first time be exposed to SOF officers attending the course with him in a professional environment. Upon graduation this officer deploys, for example, to OIF and assumes the role of an operations officer at a battalion-level organization. He must plan, make recommendations regarding organization for combat, and coordinate the actions of his battalion during



operations. His battalion is conducting stability and support operations, and within his battlespace is an SF ODA occupying a safe house; the SFODA has been conducting special reconnaissance on a high-value target. The armor operations staff officer (S3) has been tasked to conduct joint planning as a supporting effort to a CA and SF team as an outer cordon during a “knock and search” operation, and the mission is to occur in four hours. To this point in his career he has not been required to train with SOF, nor is he prepared. He has been trained to fight conventional battles against a similarly armed enemy force.

The above was, perhaps, a lengthy example, but one that underscores the current inadequacies of the officer professional education system. This, of course, applies not only to the armor school, but to all Army and Marine Corps combat arms initial entry education courses for officers, as well as midlevel noncommissioned officers (NCOs). SOF should be considered a force multiplier for the conventional forces leader, the same way fires are taught to complement maneuver forces in conventional combat. This thesis has detailed numerous examples of SOF and conventional forces integrating far below the JTF level, and this model should be incorporated into training scenarios at midlevel through command and staff college level institutions.

Conversely as SOF personnel are drawn from the conventional forces and then accepted through a rigorous selection process, their training programs expend very little effort instructing the capabilities and limitations of conventional forces. Army SF officers and NCOs do, however, attend NCO education system, and officer education system schools with their conventional counterparts.

Outside of classroom instruction, training integration is most readily feasible at the Army-run CTCs. These centers prepare units for full spectrum operations by providing a fully instrumented, observed training environment complete with a professional opposing force (OPFOR). Army units rotate through the training centers on a regular basis, participating in highly realistic scenario-based combat training, and receive expert feedback from selected experienced NCOs and officers who act as observer-controllers.

Each CTC is focused on conducting a specific type of training. The National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin is focused on armored and mechanized training for a major theater war in a desert environment. The Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC) is also focused on heavy forces for a regional conflict in a European environment. The JRTC is focused on light, and to a lesser extent SOF training in a smaller-scale contingency environment.

The CTCs maintain nearly exclusive focus on training conventional forces, but the JRTC has conducted up to eight battalion-sized rotations for ARSOF annually. Due to operational requirements, however, this number has reduced significantly in the past eighteen months. During these rotations, small numbers of ARSOF personnel either as a SOCCE or an SFLE will participate in some form of integrated training with conventional forces on their rotations. Exclusive of this are rotations involving battalions from the Ranger Regiment, which normally conduct joint readiness exercises with Army special operations aviation (ARSOA) and do not integrate with conventional forces (Hough, electronic mail interview, 3 February 2005). As of this writing, ARSOF have not participated in an NTC rotation in three years; operational tempo seems to be the major

factor behind this. As for CMTC, conventional units will occasionally see participation from CA and or PSYOP, but rarely will any other type of SOF participate, and then only as a small liaison element (Metz, electronic mail interview, 2 February 2005).

Lastly, BCTP is a simulation-based program that exercises division and corps commanders and their staffs in a range of scenarios (Rocke 2002, 1). And unlike the CTCs, BCTP does have routine participation from SOCCEs in conventional force rotations (Schabbeharr, interview, 20 January 2005).

The aforementioned doctrinal challenges regarding integration and the ramifications of transformation aside, an army must train as it fights. Numerous AARs from OEF and OIF reflect this. Consider a few comments from the Center for Army Lessons Learned OEF initial impressions report regarding integration:

SF and GPF (general purpose force) units must train together before being forced to operate together during operations. Habitual training will develop unit leaders that know and understand the capabilities of both conventional and unconventional forces. Combat Training Center (CTC) rotations should include both conventional and unconventional Army units, as well as joint and coalition forces, to prepare soldiers for future operations. (Center for Army Lessons Learned 2004, 6-33)

Currently, CTCs tailor each exercise to accomplish the training goals established in the unit commander's METL. The disparity between a conventional force and that of a SOF counterpart creates challenges to integration during a rotation to one of the training centers. However, it is readily apparent that across the full spectrum of operations, especially stability operations and support operations, these two forces can take advantage of overlap. FID, varying degrees of UW, and especially COIN operations may be exploited to fully capture the unique aspects that each force accommodates, allowing adept commander's to plan for their complimentary integration.

Currently, only the JRTC has permanently assigned SOF cadre called the special operations training division, who are responsible for integrating the planning effort between conventional and SOF units (Hough, electronic mail interview, 3 February 2005). The NTC and CMTC have no permanently assigned SOF personnel, and consequently conduct few integrated training events. As the JRTC training audience is mostly the light forces community (airborne, air assault, light brigade combat teams (BCTs)), this leads one to believe that the heavy forces community conducts very little if any training with SOF at the CTCs. Of note, whereas the conventional officers and NCOs are selected to serve as observer-controllers based on their collective experiences and performance records, the SOF cadre assigned to JRTC is not. It seems as though these SOF personnel are volunteers, seeking either individual growth and experience, or perhaps a break from the operational tempo (Hough, electronic mail interview, 3 February 2005).

The quality of training received by conventional forces at the CTCs has undoubtedly saved countless lives, and the combat testimonials from leaders bear witness to this fact;

At the conclusion of major combat operations in OIF, Colonel William Grimsley wrote to the commanding general of the NTC to thank him and his key leaders for work they did in preparing Grimsley's 1st brigade, 3rd ID. According to Grimsley, "I told them I could draw a straight line correlation from how we fought in OIF successfully directly back to my National Training Center rotation." (Fontenot, 2004, 392)

In addition, an armor battalion operations officer stated in May 2003 that his task force performed much better against the actual enemy they confronted in Iraq than they had against the "opposing forces" provided by those at the NTC in the fall of 2002 (Fontenot 2004, 393). The professional and dedicated OPFOR replicate an enemy of the

highest caliber in a major theater war, as OIF was from 19 March 2003 until perhaps the end of April 2003 with the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime. What is not replicated very well, however, are full spectrum operations conducted on a noncontiguous battlefield in a joint environment. The COE has become more urbanized, and the complexities of altitude and terrain as experienced in OEF are not replicated. The small villages and towns that are utilized at all three CTCs allow training for perhaps a battalion task force at most, and other government agencies, and non government agencies are never replicated, yet are major participants with which conventional forces and SOF must contend.

In January and February 2005, the Army's 101st Airborne Division rotated each of its three BCTs through the JRTC in preparation for a deployment to OIF later in the year. The template at JRTC has been remodeled to reflect the COE soldiers will experience in Iraq, to include dozens of Iraqi citizens brought to the United States to participate in the role-playing (Hough, personal interview, 14 October 2004). A battalion commander who had previously completed a one year rotation in OIF stated that no SOF were integrated save a CA team at his brigade headquarters, and further commented that "this was supposed to be Iraq; it was not Iraq. We ended up fighting the same old OPFOR, with the same old OPFOR tactics" (George, phone interview, 7 March 2005).

In order for the CTCs to truly integrate conventional and SOF units the scenarios must reflect full spectrum operations; the joint, multinational, and even interagency nature of the fight; noncontiguous and nonlinear battlefields; and the unique aspects of terrain. This will allow SOF to exercise their skills beyond their traditional participative role of conducting strategic reconnaissance. If there is no value added to the training

received at the CTCs over what SOF garner from their own home station training programs, then participation will continue to be minimal. The key to the integrated training is relevance.

### Material

The weapons, platforms, communication equipment, medical equipment, transportation, training software, and battle command systems are the tools that warriors use to leverage victory. It can be said with certainty that the US military enjoys a distinct advantage over its real and potential enemies with regards to the tools of warfare. US forces are outfitted with the most modern, technologically advanced items of equipment in the world due to the nation's commitment to field the most capable military in history. Starting with the lowest common denominator, the infantry foot soldier, US troops are issued items of equipment that allow them to shoot further at day or night, move faster and with greater protection, and communicate more effectively over longer distances than ever before. Equipment standardization and joint capability are absolute necessities for military organizations; items of equipment are inefficient at best if they are unable to transcend their usefulness outside a battlefield functional area or single service use. Yet, there exist material issues with regards to interservice interoperability between conventional and SOF units.

In the fall of 2002, the Army rushed to field key components of the Army Battle Command System (ABCS), which aimed to enable commanders to "see" their units and the perceived or actual positions of enemy units as displayed on an automated map overlay. The ABCS provided the core capability commanders needed to see their own forces, describe what they wanted done, and, with adequate communications, talk with

subordinates and superiors (Fontenot 2004, 394). Many units that fought in OIF had not received the entire ABCS suite, and some organizations bought and fielded workable solutions of their own. For example, the USAREUR commercial off-the-shelf solution was called command and control for personal computers (C2PC) and worked better than the maneuver control system which is the cornerstone of the ABCS system. Each wheeled and tracked vehicle, as well as rotary wing asset was to be fitted with what is informally known as blue force tracker, (BFT; “blue” forces refer to friendly, and “red” forces refer to enemy) which is a nondevelopmental system that merges the Army’s Force 21 battle command brigade and below (FBCB2) with a commercial satellite network to provide flexible communications and generate a shared view of the battlespace, including position location information. The platform level system comprises a global positioning system receiver, ruggedized computer with embedded FBCB2 functionality, and L-band satellite transponder. Conventional forces and their commanders were using a combination of these systems during OIF to view fights in which they were widely dispersed which enabled them to see their forces, plan and execute fires digitally, track the air space, and achieve high situational understanding of friendly activities (Fontenot 2004, 394-395).

A major setback was the lack of fielded systems with SOF. Obviously, the enemy does not have a “red” force tracker to allow US troops to have positional awareness of their activities. In a three-dimensional battlefield, where target acquisition can be blurred with correct identification, coupled with the overreliance on these BFT systems to provide absolute awareness, fratricide incidents between conventional units and SOF came perilously close. An example of this occurred when an SFLE attached to the 3rd ID

during OIF was ordered to conduct a linkup forward of the conventional forces position with another SOF element, which was driving nonstandard military vehicles.

Additionally, this was to be done during a particularly fierce sand storm, which reduced visibility to less than five meters. In his mission chronology, the SFLE commander wrote;

The SFLE C2 element requested a delay to link-up due to weather and the concern of the conventional headquarters with bringing civilian vehicles (the same vehicles the enemy was using) into the perimeter. The ODA was over-ruled by the V Corps SOCCE and ordered to conduct the link-up the following morning. SFLE 16 was tasked by SFLE C2 to conduct the link-up and spent the day pre-positioning to the perimeter of the 2nd BCT. SFLE C2 spent the rest of the day coordinating fire control measures for the link-up. The problem encountered was that the personnel in the 3ID HQ as well as the soldiers on the perimeter had been fighting for over 5 days straight and were exhausted. The following day SFLE 16 moved approximately 10 kilometers forward of friendly lines to conduct the link-up. During the link-up J-STARS reported through Corps that enemy forces were moving south towards 2nd BCT and sent firing data to the 3ID guns. While the firing commands were being sent to the guns one of the Division's assistant G-3s remembered that in his exhaustion he had scribbled something down about a SOF link-up being conducted. The rest of the HQ had forgotten about the link-up due to fatigue. The assistant G-3 came out to confirm the location of the link-up with the SFLE C2 element. It was confirmed that the enemy forces the J-STARS was reporting was the link-up, and the fire mission was stopped. (Franz 2003, 2)

Clearly SOF units must maintain their ability to conduct clandestine operations, and this implies using nonstandard weapons and equipment so as not to appear as a conventional US military unit. Not to do so would not only compromise their operations, but also negate stealth as one of their only means of self defense as a smaller force with less combat power. This instance clearly illustrates how a BFT-like system with less obvious signature could have prevented a fratricide incident in a less fortunate situation.

The ABCS system gives commanders unparalleled situational understanding when units have fielded the equipment. It is not just an antifratricide measure, but also a



planning tool, a targeting data system for fires, a navigational aid, and even an alternate means of instant messaging should voice communications become lost. Now consider liaison as one of the key doctrinal elements of conventional forces and SOF integration. As SOF units were not properly outfitted with this system, how effective were SOCCEs or even SFLEs in providing real time situational updates to conventional force commanders about intelligence on terrain and enemy, actions of SOF in their AO, and status of forces? The conventional commander in OIF often found out information regarding SOF activities before his liaison team did, severely reducing their effectiveness. Consider this from an ODA commander from the 19th SFG assigned as an SFLE to the 101st Airborne Division during the attack north from Kuwait towards Baghdad:

We encountered numerous problems: our laptop was not configured to operate on their LAN system, and we had none of their battle-tracking programs (C2PC/Blue-Force Tracker, ADOCs targeting, etc.). Besides this lack of computer interface with the 101st, we encountered a major systemic flaw with the SFLE mission which was repeatedly raised but never resolved: we had no timely visibility on SOF operations in the 101st's Area of Operations. The only information we had was 12 to 24 hours old, but we were continually pressed by the 101st Division Commander (MG Petraeus) and Staff for real-time information and future operational plans, of which we knew nothing. Once brigade and battalion commanders from the 101st linked up with SFODAs from 5th SFG(A) on the ground, they began receiving this real-time information and future plans; however, the SFLE was out of the loop (and so, therefore, was the 101st Division staff). Division level planning continually lagged 12 to 24 hours behind real-time developments, crippling the planning cycle from Division level. SFLE operational updates (briefed twice daily at the Battle Update Briefs) were frequently corrected by the Division Commander and his Staff, who were now getting information from their brigade/battalion commanders and the SFODAs instead of us. Our presence was redundant at best and, more often, a liability. (ODA 915 2003, 3).

Not only were SOF units at risk during the physical integration with conventional forces, but they were also severely hampered in their ability to provide timely information due to the lack of necessary equipment. Conventional Army and Marine

Corps units had visibility with one another throughout OIF, as the USMC installed the BFT system just prior to the start of operations and continued to field this system within their forces. This enabled liaison between the Army's V Corps and I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) during their parallel advance toward Baghdad to be that much more efficient. At the writing of this thesis, many SOF units have fielded an ABCS-compatible system in their government vehicles, but the issue remains with their use of nonstandard locally purchased vehicles during operational deployments, which do not have the ability to mount these systems (Briscoe and Kiper 2003, 277). As previously mentioned, a smaller, inconspicuous, and relatively easy to install system with BFT capabilities is required for SOF to operate in conjunction with conventional forces.

Besides the ability to battle-track forces adequately, conventional forces and SOF have had difficult issues regarding voice communications. The vast distances that SOF usually operate away from their forward operating bases (FOBs), coupled with the fact that they have no organic indirect fire assets, means that their radio communication sets must be joint capable and secure, and they must provide greater ranges than what is issued to conventional forces.

The most common radio system used by conventional forces is the single channel ground and airborne radio system, (SINCGARS). The SINCGARS is a man-portable or vehicle mounted radio that operates in the very high frequency range (VHF), and its operational range for effective communications is between 300 meters and 35 kilometers, with a vehicle-based, or ground-based amplifier. This radio system provides a reliable, secure, and easily maintained combat net radio that has both voice- and data-handling

capability in support of a C2 operation, but large terrain features still can block transmissions.

However, when one considers the great distances, some 200 kilometers and more, that TF Rakassan had to move for its air assault during Operation Anaconda, the SINCGARS would not suffice as a C2 net (Briscoe and Kiper 2003, 288). What conventional forces rely upon when operating at distances that exceed the SINCGARS capability is the tactical satellite radio set (TACSAT), which gives the commander the greatest range. It is useful to users separated by long distances, such as rapid deployment forces and special operations units. The single channel TACSAT radio transmits in the UHF/VHF range, which requires the antenna to have line of sight with the satellite. The major liability with this system is that it must be stationary in order to function; there is no “on the move” capability with TACSAT, as the antenna must remain oriented towards a satellite track.

The hand-held radio of choice for USSOCOM is the Army-Navy portable radio communications-148 (AN/PRC-148) multiband intrateam radio (MBITR). This thirty-one-ounce system holds seven programmable devices, with a frequency-hopping capability compatible with the SINCGARS, and is supported by a memory card that offers embedded security (indicator encryption) for both AM/FM voice and data communications (McKaughan, <http://www.special-operations-technology.com/article.cfm?DocID=119>, accessed 19 March 2005). The transceiver operates in the UHF/VHF continuous frequency range, including an AM swept-tone beacon that allows MBITR to serve as a personal survival radio when necessary. There is also an external global positioning system (GPS) interface to a precision lightweight

receiver (PLGR) (McKaughan <http://www.special-operations-technology.com/article.cfm?DocID=119>, accessed 19 March 2005). What this radio allows its operator to do that a conventional commander cannot is talk over greater distances, over three different frequency modulations, and interface with CAS aircraft if necessary. A SOF commander can talk to his subordinates while moving over broken terrain and at greater distances than can a conventional commander, yet they are fighting on the same battlefield, and often integrated.

Conventional forces need the MBITR down to the platoon level for effective C2 in joint operations in the COE.

### Leadership

Perhaps the most important area this thesis will analyze is the impact leadership has on the integration of conventional forces and SOF. The term leadership is open to broad interpretation, and often words like authority, conducting, directing, and managing are summoned to define it more clearly. For the purposes of this thesis, the definition of leadership from FM 22-100 will be used as a baseline, and will aid in analyzing how conventional forces and SOF view this tenet, as well as each other in integrated operations: “Influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation while operating to accomplish the mission and improving the organization” (FM 22-100 1999, 1-4).

Leaders influence people, to include subordinates, peers, and superiors alike. Many factors shape *how* leaders influence; culture, their system of beliefs, and attitudes formed through real and shared experiences, including how others have influenced them. Conventional forces and SOF have unique cultural differences, which influence their

behavior and thus impact on how they, in turn, lead others. This section will attempt to highlight those differences and demonstrate how leadership often hinders effective conventional force and SOF integration.

Culture is a set of subconscious assumptions, an organization's collective "state of mind," and, as such, it is frustratingly difficult to describe and articulate (Fastabend and Simpson 2004, 2). Yet, undoubtedly, each military service has its own distinct personality, and these cultural characteristics influence service operations, to include joint operations (Builder 1989, 17). In Carl Builder's *The Masks of War*, he examines each service in war and peace by missions, roles, procurement philosophy, leadership styles and corporate cultures. He methodically categorizes the institutional personalities into four recognizable behavior patterns. These patterns are concerns with self-measurement; preoccupation with technology versus the arts; degrees and extent of intra-service distinctions; and insecurities about service legitimacy and relevancy (Builder 1989, 32). It is important to keep this in mind during the analysis of how culture influences leadership with regards to conventional and SOF integration.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 was the first attempt to breach the self-contained thinking of the service cultures, and, coupled with the advent of the USSOCOM, introduced a completely new force structure for which the Army, Navy, and Air Force would now find themselves as force providers. The cold war paradigm of "AirLand Battle," which anticipated pitting massive heavily armored formations against one another on the northern European plain, led to a conventional force bias against the utility of SOF. However, the impetus for USSOCOM and the renewed importance placed on SOF was the fundamental shift in the threat to the US that began with the emergence

of terrorism in the 1970s, and this new menace required specific skills that were not resident in the military institutions at large (Horn 2004, 4).

Relatively small, highly skilled and mobile units with a fairly small “footprint” provided political and military leadership with a viable response. SOF enjoyed resurgence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, due to the fact that they now had a unified command, control over their own resources, and finally representation in the highest levels of DOD. The terrorist attacks upon the US in September 2001 put into motion a SOF-led campaign that represented the culmination of their acceptance as a core element of the US military.

Despite this, the cultural and philosophical chasm between the conventional military and SOF are a substantial and constant theme, and the animosity is long standing. The modern military writer Tom Clancy observed that SOF “units and their men are frequently seen as ‘sponges,’ sucking up prized personnel and funds at the expense of ‘regular’ units” (Clancy 2001, 3). Perhaps the greatest point of contention that conventional leaders have with SOF is the pilfering of manpower. It is understandable that commanders are resentful that some of their best soldiers are recruited and lost to SOF units. Considering the profile of personnel SOF are looking for, that is, energetic, enterprising, physically fit, it is a normal reaction of any commander when some of his best men are lost to these units (Horn 2004, 6).

Another general complaint is that the equipment of these special units was more generous than that of conventional forces, and as historian Philip Warner notes in his book about the history of the Special Air Service, “special forces are often the subject of envy, dislike and misunderstanding because they are issued with equipment which is

often more lavish than that provided to their parent units” (Horn 2004, 7). The core of this argument was always that the investment of valuable, highly skilled, and scarce manpower, combined with the extravagant consumption of material resources failed to provide a worthwhile return for the costs incurred (Horn 2004, 7).

Conventional commanders were incensed that SOF were perceived to receive the best personnel and too much funding, despite the fact that they spent the least time in actual combat. When SOF did undertake combat operations, conventional leadership noted that the results were often abysmal with regards to casualty rates. Consider the casualty rates of some SOF operations in World War II; US Navy combat demolition units suffered a casualty rate of 52 percent, the First Special Service Force suffered a 78 percent casualty rate in Italy, and in the same fighting during the attempted break-in at Cisterna, only 6 of 767 US Army rangers returned. When considering contemporary SOF operations, it appears as though the trend has continued. During Operation Urgent Fury, the invasion of Grenada in 1983, 47 percent of casualties were SOF, and in Panama during operation JUST CAUSE in 1989 the rate was 48 percent. Operation DESERT STORM reflected 17 percent of casualties belonging to SOF, and in 1993 in Somalia the number rose to 62 percent. Through 2003, 63 percent of casualties suffered in OEF have been SOF (Horn 2004, 8). Understandably, the argument that SOF incurs far too high a casualty rate seems justifiable.

Continuing to expand the chasm between conventional and SOF units are the concepts of discipline and accountability. A conventional perception is that SOF lack discipline and military bearing; that they see themselves as outside the realm of such pettiness. This is because leadership and standards of discipline are often more informal

within SOF, and emphasis on uniformity, ceremony, and the sharp appearance normally associated with a military figure is often relaxed. Command Sergeant Major (retired) Eric Haney noted that when he first reported as a young NCO to his new unit as a special forces operator, he was amazed by what he saw, “Sergeants Major are the walking, breathing embodiment of everything that’s right in the US Army,” he explained. But his first meeting with his new sergeant major caught him by complete surprise, “This guy looked like Joe Shit the Ragman. His shirt was wide open and he wore no T-shirt. His dog tags were gold plated. His hat was tipped up on the back of his head, and he wore a huge, elaborately curled and waxed handlebar moustache” (Haney 2002, 20).

Consider Haney’s initial reaction as a then-conventional soldier; SOF personnel may regard uniformity and crispness in their dress as having little bearing on the unit’s ability to fight, but without a doubt this “trivial” aspect has an enormous impact on how the respective unit is perceived by others, namely outsiders. And the fact of the matter is that SOF realize their relaxed discipline and dress codes irritate the conventional forces (Horn 2004, 9). This is part of the allure of SOF, their need to clearly separate themselves from the “regular” forces, which, in turn, fosters so much animosity from the conventional hierarchy. This results from the fact that most of the individuals who are selected to SOF units chafe at rigid discipline and yearn for something different than the lock-step formality in conventional units. William O. Darby, the first commanding officer of the modern US Army Rangers in World War II noted that his battalion consisted largely of “mavericks who couldn’t make it in conventional units. Commanding the Rangers, was like driving a team of very high spirited horses. No effort was needed to get them to go forward. The problem was to hold them in check” (Darby 1993, 184).



The soldiers who choose this lifestyle must pass through the rigors of a mental and physical selection, which includes difficult and hazardous training, thus fostering a sense of heightened self-confidence and intense loyalty to those within their small circle. SOF members frequently develop an outlook that treats those outside the “club” as inferior and unworthy of respect. Often this sense of independence from the conventional forces, as well as the lack of respect for traditional forms of discipline, spawns what some analysts describe as the emergence of units that are more akin to clans than military organizations (Horn 2004, 10). This type of attitude has its consequences, as observed by Tom Clancy: “Too often, there’s friction, competition, and rivalry- a situation often made worse by the sometimes heavy handed ways of the SOF community” (Clancy 2001, 281). In the end, when conventional forces and SOF are integrated and an underlying attitude of reluctance, compounded by arrogance, exists, it tends to breed animosity and mistrust soon follows. These barriers hamper the sharing of information, and ultimately everyone loses.

Manpower skimming, competition for resources, and disagreement over standards of discipline are, however, only underlying themes with regards to the true nature of the conflict. The fact remains that conventional forces and SOF have divergent methods to conduct the business of war. Irregular or unconventional warfare is by its nature nontraditional in its scope and methods of execution. The founder of modern US Army SF, Colonel (retired) Aaron Banks explained, “To the orthodox, traditional soldier, unconventional warfare was something slimy, underhanded, illegal, and ungentlemanly. It did not fit into the honor code of that profession of arms” (Horn 2004, 11).

Hence, conventional commanders view the units that undertake these unconventional missions as almost separate or privatized armies. They operate outside the known realm of the conventional and exist by utilizing methods that subvert known channels; far more important to the SOF warrior is that the ends justify the means. The authorization for their unorthodox actions often resides at the highest levels, and often SOF find themselves with a champion to ensure their existence and defend their actions. General George C. Marshall personally pushed for the establishment of the Army Rangers, President Franklin D. Roosevelt allowed the director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) to maintain a direct pipeline to the White House, and later President John F. Kennedy heaped praise and attention on the Army SF, much to the dislike of his conventional chiefs of staff (Horn, 2004, 12). Recently, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has personally ensured that SOF have taken the role as the supported command in the WOT, greatly increased their budget, and authorized an increase in manpower.

Another additive to the cultural bias, is the perceived 'security concern' SOF has when working with conventional forces. SOF often operate inside a conventional force's battlespace to conduct operations without notifying them of their presence. These missions are often of short duration, and sometimes the second- and third-order effects of SOF actions create belligerent reactions from the local populace. The conventional force must now take the blame and perhaps bear the brunt of the response to a clandestine operation. Yet, the reason for disregarding conventional forces is one of operational security.

However, as previously illustrated, SOF go to great lengths to ensure their manner of dress, exotic equipment, and uniforms are completely different from the conventional

patterns, even when not required to do so for operational purposes, and are easily identified (Horn 2004, 12). One need only look at pictures of SOF soldiers in Afghanistan to notice the longer hair, beards, no indication of rank, mixed civilian and military dress, fashionable eyewear, and baseball caps to clearly delineate a SOF and conventional soldier. Understandably, SOF operators may deem the wearing of beards as vital to establishing credibility and respect with Afghani warlords, but non operational support personnel seem to have adopted this trend with no apparent requirement. This need for operational security and secrecy leads only to added misunderstanding between the two forces and creates further mistrust.

Lastly, the SOF soldier is philosophically different than the conventional soldier. The SOF environment thrives on individuals who are free thinkers with tremendous skills and capabilities and who do things in an unconventional manner. To the conventional commander, this counters the very structure of the military environment; order, precision, checklists, and procedure are the foundation upon which they rely. Commanders, not subordinates, make decisions. SOF, however, are nonconformists and critical thinkers who are encouraged at every level to conceive innovative concepts and challenge assumptions. Their survival on the battlefield relies upon their ability to adapt to unsteady to unpredictable situations and to develop different methods coupled with tactics and equipment. This is the strength of SOF, and the greatest difference with conventional forces.

### Personnel

This analysis concludes that there is no need to create a new military occupational skill (MOS) to enable the better integration of conventional forces and SOF; the issues

analyzed herein did not lead the author to that deduction. It does, however, foresee the need to create the duty position or billet of liaison officer and NCO. This is a doctrinally critical function that is currently not supported by either force in their organizational makeup, and is usually staffed by personnel who would normally occupy other significant billets. This also will require a joint training program of instruction that dictates mandatory attendance of personnel selected to become LNOs. Ironically, the US Army instructs personnel selected to become foreign area officers not only through language training, but also military and cultural awareness, yet our own military education system does nothing to educate personnel liaising within DOD.

#### Facilities

This analysis concludes that there are no areas of concern that impact the requirement for additional, or revitalized facilities within the DoD to further aid in the integration of conventional forces and SOF. There exist adequate or even superior facilities that enable joint conventional and SOF organizations the ability to train for their wartime missions.

#### Case Study Analysis: JSOTF-North and the 173rd Airborne Brigade

Up to this point, the analysis has used many different examples of integration in order to provide more comprehensive understanding, utilizing DOTMLPF as a tool for examination. Using the same construct, the thesis will now focus on a specific relationship in an operational setting to provide an inclusive perspective.

## Background

This case study is based on what was at the time a unique relationship that saw a vast array of conventional and SF units from fourteen different commands in US Army, Europe (USAREUR), US Air Force, Europe (USAFE), 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, and the continental US under the C2 of a SOF headquarters for joint operations in northern Iraq. This headquarters was built around Colonel Charlie Cleveland's 10th SFG, which also provided its own 2nd and 3rd Battalions to the task organization.

When initially tasked to lead JSOTF-N, Colonel Cleveland had assumed that the Army's 4th ID would provide the bulk of the conventional forces attacking from the north into the thirteen divisions of the Iraqi Army along a 350 kilometer front, allowing his JSOTF-N forces to conduct UW with the Kurdish Peshmerga ("those who face death"), SR, and DA as required (Robinson 2004, 299). This was a planning assumption based entirely on the government of Turkey allowing US forces to conduct reception, staging, onward movement and integration on its soil, enabling both the large conventional and SOF forces a line of operation from the north. Despite being a close US ally and opponent of Saddam Hussein, Turkey's parliament voted in early March 2003 to decline the use of its territory for an invasion of a fellow Muslim country (Robinson 2004, 297).

In light of this, the task to fix the nearly 100,000 Iraqi soldiers in those thirteen divisions and prevent them from repositioning south against the main coalition attack towards Baghdad fell to the JSOTF-N (Robinson 2004, 299). In addition, this small task force would have to defeat and, if necessary destroy Iraqi forces defending the country's

third and fourth-largest cities, Mosul and Kirkuk, and secure its second largest oilfields (Robinson 2004, 299).

For its part, the 173rd Airborne Brigade had been notified as early as October 2002 that the concept for their operations would entail being under the OPCON of the 4th ID for its northern attack from Turkey. A planning team from the 173rd headquarters, led by the brigade commander Colonel William Mayville, flew twice to Fort Hood, Texas, to conduct joint planning with the 4th ID staff in November and December. This versatile, completely motorized airborne brigade had what the most modernized mechanized division in the world did not, a preponderance of dismounted infantryman well trained in air assault operations. The 173rd believed that if it were called to go to war in Iraq, it would be with the conventional heavy forces from Fort Hood.

In those short weeks prior to the invasion, the JSOTF-N had only its organic support staff, intelligence and signals personnel, a few special operations airmen and their fearsome AC-130 spectre gunships, plus a task force of ground units limited to three SF battalions, about fifty ODAs, and roughly 60,000 lightly armed Kurdish militias (Robinson 2004, 299). As Turkey had refused basing and overflight use, the JSOTF-N headquarters was further hampered by having to establish a base of operations in Constanta, Romania.

Prior to the Turkish decision, USCENTCOM recognized the requirement for additional combat power in the north, should the 4th ID be denied that avenue of approach, and requested in January 2003 through FORSCOM to USEUCOM that the 173rd Airborne Brigade conduct joint planning operations with CFSOCC in anticipation of a TACON relationship to JSOTF-N. When the 173rd first received this direction from

USEUCOM, with specific instructions to consider options for an airborne operation, it began a detailed mission analysis of suitable locations in northern Iraq for such a contingency.

A few weeks later, from 17-19 February 2003, the 173rd and representatives from CFSOCC conducted a joint planning session in Vicenza, Italy. Also present were key personnel from the JSOTF-N staff, as well as two SF battalion commanders. At this time, the 173rd still believed that its priorities for planning were for operations OPCON to 4th ID, as the Turkish parliament had not yet declined use of its territory. However, the joint, albeit short planning effort enabled both forces to gain understanding of each other's capabilities, facilitated a greater appreciation of the complexities of the AO by the 173rd through the passing of valuable intelligence from the JSOTF-N staff, and led the joint planning group to agree that Bashur Airfield, approximately forty kilometers east of Irbil, would be the most suitable place for the 173rd to conduct an airborne operation.

Even though the location to introduce the 173rd into the JSOA had been agreed upon, the key tasks that the JSOTF-N staff envisioned the conventional brigade accomplishing were not. Additionally, Colonel Mayville's concern over C2 relationships, joint fires deconfliction, battlespace, logistics, and communications would continue to be major impediments to the planning and working relationship.

Following this meeting, the CFSOCC planners returned to their forward headquarters in Qatar to consolidate their information, while JSOTF-N key personnel returned to Constanta, Romania to continue planning the infiltration of ODAs, now made tenfold more difficult without the use of Turkish airspace. The 173rd Brigade staff was now vexed with continuing to coordinate and refine their plan with the 4th ID, which

would involve shipping over 400 pieces of rolling stock to Turkey for an eventual ground attack, while also planning for the complexities of a possible airborne operation in enemy held territory, to include moving 2,000 personnel and all rolling stock by air.

Scarcely ten days later, on 1 March 2003, the Turkish Parliament voted to deny the use of its territory to some 62,000 US troops (mainly the 4th ID) for an attack into northern Iraq (Fontenot, 2004, 223). USCENTCOM then ordered the ships carrying the combat equipment of the 4th ID to redirect to a port in Kuwait, putting them weeks behind their operational timeline. In light of this, USCENTCOM directed another joint planning effort hosted by CFSOCC to finalize a course of action for the introduction of the 173rd into northern Iraq under the control of the JSOTF-N.

On 7 March, a robust planning staff from the 173rd flew to CFSOCC headquarters (forward) in Doha, Qatar to further synchronize their efforts with the SOF planners and come to an agreement on the key tasks the conventional brigade could accomplish once a lodgment was established on Bashur Airfield. Following an intense seventy-two hour planning session, the joint team briefed a viable course of action to the CFSOCC commander, Brigadier General Gary Harrell, as well as representatives from all supporting units and organizations to ensure understanding.

Immediately afterward, the 173rd staff returned to Italy, and left a small LNO team consisting of a major, a lieutenant, and a senior NCO in Qatar. The JSOTF-N also sent an SFLE to Vicenza to assist the further planning efforts, and aid in coordinating with their higher headquarters in Constanta, Romania. Coordination and planning continued at all three headquarters locations over the next two weeks in anticipation of a deployment order. On Friday, 21 March, the 173rd received the message to begin its



execution timeline sequence for an airborne operation into northern Iraq and conduct subsequent combat operations.

On 26 March 2003 at 2000 hours (ZULU), the code words “banner elk” were broadcast over the TACSAT radio from the lead USAF aircraft, notifying the JSOTF-N elements already securing the drop zone that the airborne assault on Objective Buford was commencing. In complete blackness, 965 paratroopers descended silently in the frigid, wet, northern Iraqi night.

Only two hours before, US Air Force special tactics squadron (STS) personnel on the DZ radioed to the inbound aircraft that a minimum ceiling for the operation did not exist, and that an air-land might have to replace an airborne operation. Colonel Mayville had decided to delay his decision and wait for the weather to clear until the last possible moment. Scarcely one hour before P-Hour, or the dedicated time when the first paratrooper was to exit the lead aircraft, the cloud cover lifted, and the 44th combat airborne operation in US military history was underway. The highly successful airborne operation was arguably the last time the JSOTF-N and the 173rd worked together cohesively over the next four weeks.

The Operational Detachment-Bravo (ODB), which had infiltrated before the jump, had coordinated for hundreds of allied Peshmerga fighters to isolate the area, and turned off the power lines running parallel to the drop zone should a paratrooper become entangled. Their attached STS personnel surveyed and maintained constant situational understanding of the weather conditions over the area, notifying JSOTF-N headquarters of the situation hourly. In addition, Colonel Mayville ordered that three of his long-range surveillance teams infiltrate before the jump, and these soldiers linked up with ODA

personnel and stayed at a safe house secured by Peshmerga soldiers. Only seventeen paratroopers received minor injuries normally associated with mass-tactical airborne operations, and during the next cycle of darkness the 173rd began air landing the remainder of its personnel and equipment.

The next four weeks proved to be a seesaw battle of wills between the two organizations, as each conceptually saw its concept of operations move in different directions. This began with the initial joint planning effort in Vicenza, and was never truly resolved even after the CFSOCC deputy commanding general, Brigadier General James W. Parker, flew in to Bashur prior to the 173rd's jump to mitigate differences between Colonel Cleveland and Colonel Mayville. This thesis will offer a brief summary using DOTMLPF in order to more fully define the underlying issues retarding the integration of the 173rd and JSOTF-N.

### Doctrine

As this was a true joint effort with an army conventional force subordinated to a joint SOF task force, the C2 relationships were perhaps not entirely wrong, but could have been more clearly defined using joint-friendly doctrine. For instance, the 173rd was OPCON to CFSOCC, and then delegated TACON to JSOTF-N. The OPCON relationship is understandable as it is defined as “the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission” (JP 3-0 2001, II-9). But during the entire planning process, the author recalls not one instance of exploring the possibility of a direct support or close support relationship of the 173rd to the JSOTF-N. As TACON is normally

limited to the detailed and specific local direction of movement and maneuver of forces to accomplish a task, a supporting relationship would be less restrictive in nature and would have allowed the 173rd commander the ability to direct his own forces to aid, protect, or sustain the JSOTF-N through actions against targets or objectives that are sufficiently near the supported force as to require detailed integration and coordination (JP 3-0 2001, II-9).

A major point of contention for 173rd commander was the battlespace allotted to his forces in the JSOA in the vicinity of Bashur Airfield. A key task following an airborne assault is to normally expand the airhead line and establish a lodgment to enable further air landing operations of follow-on forces. To facilitate this, an airborne force normally shapes its battlespace by eventually expanding the lodgment out to the extent of its organic indirect fire assets and allocates observers to cover likely enemy avenues of approach. This allows the brigade headquarters the ability to clear its own fires without having to coordinate with adjacent units. The reasoning for this is simple: more coordination and deconfliction required to clear a mission reduces the responsiveness of fires on often fleeting targets of opportunity. For the 173rd, this roughly equated to an area in circumference fourteen kilometers from the airfield, the range of its 105mm howitzers, a planning figure unacceptable to the JSOTF-N which already had ODBs and ODAs operating throughout this area.

It must be pointed out that the 173rd was operating in an area that was twenty kilometers from the nearest known Ansar Al-Islam terrorist camp, and nearly forty kilometers from the nearest regular Iraqi army units, a fact acknowledged by the 173rd staff when brought to their attention by the SOF planners in Qatar. The counter to this

argument was that an airborne brigade defending an airfield against a possible armor or mechanized attack could not simply escape and evade under CAS protection like a twelve man ODA; it must stand and fight, utilizing all assets afforded a conventional unit in the defense. In the end, the 173rd's battlespace was not expanded beyond the range of its medium mortars, and coordination and control measures were established with the local ODB through the attached SFLE for any ODAs or Peshmerga forces entering the 173rd's AO.

What is perhaps most telling is an analysis of the mission statements from the JSOTF-N- in this case the higher headquarters, and the 173rd- the subordinate headquarters. To ensure unity of effort, a nesting analysis is often used to ensure the purpose of the higher unit's mission is reflected in the subordinate's statement. The JSOTF-N mission statement has been declassified and reads: "On order, JSOTF-N conducts Unconventional Warfare and other special operations in JSOA (Joint Special Operations Area) North to disrupt Iraqi combat power, IOT (in order to) prevent effective military operations against CFLCC forces" (Ramirez 2004, 44).

A dissection of this mission statement clearly directs the purpose of the operation to be *preventing effective military operations against CFLCC forces*, and the task that will achieve this purpose is to *disrupt Iraqi combat power*. The mission, or the means to accomplish the task and purpose of the JSOTF-N is through the conduct of UW, and other special operations.

The 173rd order for Operation Northern Delay has not been declassified; however, the author was involved in planning 173rd operations in northern Iraq and the brigade's mission statement did not reflect a clear nesting of the JSOTF-N task or

purpose. Rather, the 173rd's purpose, roughly translated, was preventing possible Turkish, Iranian, and Iraqi forces from seizing key oil infrastructures, and its doctrinal task that would achieve this purpose was to deter. The airborne assault was the mission, or the overt method used to achieve deterrence, thereby influencing the actions of hostile, and potentially hostile forces in northern Iraq. On order, the brigade saw itself seizing those key oil infrastructures once a lodgment was established and sufficient combat power was built up.

Clearly, the two organizations did not see a unified purpose for their actions, even though one was subordinate to the other, and both operated exclusively in the JSOA against a common threat. Effective integration was nearly impossible for the 173rd and JSOTF-N to achieve when their perceived missions were desynchronized from the outset.

### Organization

A significant factor inhibiting effective organization was the lack of resourced LNO teams at the 173rd brigade headquarters, which forced them to strip away key personnel from their plans and operations staff, as well as a leadership position. One major, two captains, a lieutenant, and a master sergeant were all devoted as LNOs to the CFSOCC and JSOTF-N throughout the period of this relationship. At one point, these teams were simultaneously located in Qatar, Romania, and Iraq, attempting to provide situational understanding to the brigade headquarters, while also attempting to deconflict issues that stemmed from the lack of knowledge of each other's actions at these separate locations. For instance, the author was an LNO in northern Iraq attempting to provide answers to the JSOTF-N (Forward) on convoy operations flowing from Turkey, completely unaware that the brigade had sent two captains as LNOs to the JSOTF-N in

Romania to work the same issue. An established, resourced LNO team with effective communications could have coordinated and prevented this redundancy of effort, preventing hours of wasted time.

Another impediment to joint integration of these units stemmed from the location of the joint fires element (JFE) within the JSOTF-N. This element coordinated and cleared all fires requests within the JSOA, and was located in Constanta, Romania. Therefore, in effect, for the 173rd to conduct an artillery fire mission in support of the JSOTF-N, it had to coordinate with the JSOTF-N (Forward) headquarters in Iraq and then clear its mission with the JFE in Romania using a TACSAT radio. This very thing happened on 6 and 9 April 2003, when the 173rd's howitzer battery conducted artillery raids in support of an SF led advance by Peshmerga forces across the autonomous Kurdish zone. These were the only two instances when the 173rd fired in support of ODAs and the Kurdish forces they led, and the results were mixed. The author recalls that during the mission on 9 April, the SF teams acting as observers requested a 'shift fire' mission from the original planned target to instead attack enemy observation posts. This request took over ten minutes to clear, at which time the firing battery had already prepared their guns for movement, and the infantry security element had also prepared to withdraw, leaving enemy targets unserved and able to further interdict JSOTF-N offensive operations.

### Training

The impacts of training on this particular relationship echo what has previously been stated in this chapter. The unfamiliarity of the 173rd brigade with SOF missions and capabilities not only led to misunderstanding, but also wasted time during planning

efforts. For instance, the ability of the forward operating bases to conduct UW with the Peshmerga forces and the conditions they could set in the JSOA were not fully realized by the brigade planners, and they restricted their courses of action to primarily those of protecting the force. Witness the brigade's insistence on remaining at Bashur Airfield for over two weeks until USAREUR's immediate ready task force (IRTF), which consisted of a heavy tank team of M1A2 Abrams and M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, and a mechanized infantry team with engineers, scouts, MPs, plus C2 capability in nine additional M113 armored personnel carriers, had also air landed, providing significant additional firepower against Iraqi forces (Warren and Barclay, 2003, 13).

As a brigade plans officer and company commander in the 173rd, the author can recount training extensively utilizing this concept of seizing an airfield and expanding a lodgment, enabling the air landing of USAREUR's heavy immediate reaction company, or medium immediate reaction company, and had done so during several rotations to the CMTC, and two exercises in Hungary (Turner, <http://anysoldier.com/Brian/Hungary/HungarianResponse2002/>, accessed 24 March 2005). The 173rd had not, in nearly four years of the author's personal experience, ever planned or trained with SOF other than during brief exposure to their personnel while co-using training areas in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

The adage "train as you fight, and fight as you train" was never more apparent than during the 173rd's initial three weeks in northern Iraq following its airborne operation, as further planning for offensive operations with the JSOTF-N staff was decidedly "on hold" until the heavy armored and mechanized forces were introduced.

To be sure, there were misunderstandings of conventional force capabilities from a SOF perspective as well, and as LNO the author was vested with providing information and further understanding on those matters. But those issues for the most part were minor, and in this instance the conventional force's misgivings about SOF due to unfamiliarity led to an impediment to the overall mission.

### Materials

Due to the fact that the JSOTF-N and 173rd headquarters operated upwards of sixty kilometers apart, FM communications were not feasible. Therefore, TACSAT radio, INMARSAT telephone, or iridium cell phones were the only suitable means of communications. Whereas the JSOTF-N had a preponderance of TACSAT and HF radios, the 173rd had only a limited number of these systems, and at times communications were limited or completely nonexistent.

During the initial hours and into the second day of the 173rd's operations in northern Iraq, the brigade depended heavily upon its attached SFLE, and the co-located ODB for communication to the JSOTF-N. However, once the main tactical operations center (TOC) was operational on the DZ at Bashur Airfield, a TACSAT radio was dedicated to the JSOTF-N command net. This, however, proved to be an unreliable means of instant communication, as the author recalls having to contact the ODB operating in close proximity of the 173rd to either remind the brigade TOC to monitor the radio, conduct checks and services on their equipment, and conduct frequent radio checks to ensure connectivity. Other limiting features to this radio are that it must be used while stationary, it takes a trained operator nearly ten minutes to set up, it requires a clear shot for the directional antenna to be aimed on a correct azimuth towards the user satellite, and



it consumes batteries at a high rate if not powered by a remote source. On 11 April 2003, during the first critical hours of the 173rd's attack to secure the city of Kirkuk, Colonel Cleveland had no means of direct communication with the 173rd command group in order to coordinate actions with his ODAs and Peshmerga forces already inside the city. Communication was relayed using an HF fires net from JSOTF-N to the 173rd ALO, who then relayed orders to the brigade commander using FM radio.

Another means of communication available were iridium cell phones, which use the global satellite network for voice and short text messaging. However, as this means of communication was being used in an operational environment, speaking over a nonsecure or open line was inappropriate; therefore the phones had to be operated in a secure (encrypted) mode. This was within the system's capability, but success rate for the iridium cell phone in secure mode was less than 50 percent. Additionally, the battery life for these phones was limited to only a few hours before they had to be recharged and completely out of use.

Lastly, the INMARSAT (International Maritime Satellite) phone system was the third method of communication. As the name suggests, INMARSAT uses a network originally designed for commercial maritime operations. However, it has since been adapted to include military and security forces application, and also provides point-to-point communication. As these are expensive systems, there were very few INMARSAT phone sets in either the JSOTF-N, or 173rd TOCs, and at times there were several individuals waiting to use a single telephone.

Units within the two organizations that were operating in close proximity had no difficulties communicating, as frequencies were exchanged for use on FM radio sets at

battalion level and below when integrating with ODBs and ODAs. However, it is clear that equipment to maintain primary and alternate communications was present at the higher headquarters, but entirely inadequate for C2. The lack of TACSAT radios within the 173rd, coupled with that system's inability to be used while moving, was only compounded by the INMARSAT system. There is no single solution to this problem; more TACSAT radios or INMARSAT telephones might have helped the situation, but not completely solved it. As previously stated, the PRC-148 MBITR radio offers a possible solution to this problem, provided there are sufficient quantities for key personnel.

### Leadership

There was no source of greater friction or one that caused a greater impediment to integration between the JSOTF-N and 173rd than this single area. From the initial planning sessions through combat operations, and until the command relationship was dissolved in mid April 2003, the inability to tactfully set aside one's personal bias against the other's organization far outweighed any other point of contention.

This thesis cannot attempt to fully explore the cultural biases that exist between combat arms, combat support, and combat service support units, much less the intricacies of those among the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps. But SOF, especially those whose mission is UW, FID, and irregular warfare, tend to be regarded by those in the conventional, and more specifically combat arms units, as "white SOF", and therefore beneath their own capabilities to plan, and decisively engage and defeat the enemy. After all, combat arms, i.e. infantry, armor, and field artillery, for example, utilize overwhelming firepower coupled with maneuver to defeat enemy forces. SOF do not by

their very structure have this capability. Therefore, when a conventional organization like the 173rd Airborne Brigade with its two thousand paratroopers, who are predominantly infantrymen, are subordinated to a JSOTF headquarters, its leaders are inherently suspect of SOF to effectively plan and C2 them in combat. The author was privy to many a random comment that “they [SOF] don’t know what they’re doing; we have more capability than they do. We should be in control” regardless that the focus in the JSOA-N was predominantly one of UW at the time, a mission the 173rd is not trained to execute.

Furthermore, the very rank and grade of the two commanders might conceivably have been an issue, compounded by the clash of conventional and SOF cultures mentioned previously. As mentioned, the JSOTF-N commander was Colonel Charlie Cleveland who also commanded the 10th SFG, and the 173rd Airborne Brigade commander was Colonel William Mayville. Both held the same rank and had equal levels of responsibility. But with Mayville’s 173rd now TACON to the JSOTF-N, he was inherently and directly responsible to a SOF officer. Conventional commanders of equal rank are from time to time subordinated to one another, based on unit capabilities, experience, or even size of the force they command. But it is no stretch to visualize the strain between the two commanders in this particular instance. To quote an officer from the CFSOCC joint planning group J3 regarding the two commander’s relationship, a “dynamic tension exists.”

To underscore the likelihood that rank was a source of friction, the author flew into the JSOA-N with the deputy commanding general CFSOCC one day prior to the 173rd’s airborne operation, who wanted to ensure that the critical time period immediately following the jump and the TACON transition of the 173rd under the

JSOTF-N went smoothly and in a positive manner. This was so, because even the moment TACON was to take effect was hotly debated. The CFSOCC and JSOTF-N planners stated that TACON should take effect when the first paratrooper exits the lead aircraft, while Colonel Mayville initially insisted that his brigade not be subordinated until all his forces had closed in the JSOA-N and the airhead secured, which was approximately five days. A compromise was eventually achieved, but only days prior to execution.

From the author's perspective, over the next four weeks it often required the brigadier general's authority and direct intervention to certify that this did take place. For quite some time, it appeared as though there were two distinct and separate organizations operating in the same AO, one securing an airfield, receiving follow-on combat power and sustainment for eventual conventional combat operations in the vicinity of Kirkuk and associated oil infrastructure; and the other conducting UW with Peshmerga forces against the Ansar Al Islam terrorist organization, as well as regular Iraqi forces across the "green line" from the Kurdish autonomous zone to prevent the enemy's repositioning against coalition forces in the south. Although one supported the other through a TACON relationship, there never truly was a unity of effort because unity of command existed only in name.

One might argue that this is not a leadership issue, as it relates to integration, but rather one of seniority of one over another based upon equality of rank, coupled with the strident cultural bias. The author can write with certainty that this truly was an issue regarding conventional force and SOF integration in the instance of this relationship.

### Personnel and Facilities

After a thorough analysis, the author can conclude that the last two elements of the DOTMLPF construct, personnel and facilities had no impact upon this particular relationship. The correct and necessary personnel were present to conduct the integrated mission, although perhaps not quite organized in the most efficient manner as stated above. Nothing points to a requirement necessitating a new MOS; only that they, specifically LNOs, be properly organized and trained. Facilities also require no additional consideration, as they had no impact on the 173rd and JSOTF-N relationship.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Throughout the research of this thesis, many important discoveries were made regarding conventional forces and SOF integration. There are numerous examples of successful integration that have occurred over nearly four years during the execution of the WOT, but the author chose to focus the analysis on areas that could be improved. This is based upon the conclusion that there are more areas that are insufficient with regards to integration, than there are those that are successful. The benchmark for such a claim stems from the parallels drawn between the interwar period following World War I and World War II, and the period following the Goldwaters-Nichols Act of 1986 until present. SOF, although now recognized legally as its own branch of service and charged as the lead agency to conduct the WOT, are no more integrated into the forethought and planning with conventional forces than air forces were by ground commanders after the First World War though their undeniable utility was forever solidified.

The armed forces rely heavily on doctrine and TTP when planning and preparing for operations. Undeniable use of checklists, formats, and acronyms are in the mental kit bag of every professional soldier to help compartmentalize the vast amounts of doctrine and TTP that form the foundations of operational and tactical planning. Commanders and staff utilize the military decision making process to guide their planning process, and analyze missions using the concept of METT-TC (mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations). They further ensure they synchronize all elements of the BOS into their plan to ensure the synergistic

effects across all lines of operation are accounted for. But what BOS do SOF and the capabilities they provide fit into? SOF could conceivably be an asset in maneuver, intelligence, fires, and C2. At times they could provide all or a combination of those, and even beyond, with the ability to conduct UW, for instance. The conventional thinker normally does not consider SOF because it is not prevalent throughout the course of his professional training to even ponder their capabilities.

Currently junior conventional leaders from the lowest levels, through brigade level organizations are learning and adapting to the asymmetry of the battlefields of OEF and OIF and integrating with SOF through necessity. Conventional forces and SOF are not mutually exclusive organizations with dissimilar objectives; although their lines of operation may be different, the effects desired, that is, the *results*, are the same.

The military as an institution must be able to recognize when improvements or innovation is necessary, and act decisively at the appropriate time to affect the current situation. As a nation at war, this thesis has outlined areas using the DOTLMPF model where the greatest need for improvement regarding the integration of conventional forces and SOF exists. It is now the responsibility of senior leadership to overcome cultural bias against sister services and adapt a culture of innovation, as the warriors on the battlefield have in spite of these deficiencies. In effect, leadership is the aspect that requires the most change.

Paradoxically, to alter the culture, everything other than culture must be addressed. As John Kotter describes in *Leading Change*, culture is not amenable to direct attack. Behavior drives culture; to change culture, behavior must be changed (Fastabend and Simpson, 2004, 3). The conventional force and SOF senior leaders must inherently

think joint, rather than retroactively, go beyond their own myopic solutions to problems, and then apply these new solutions to joint warfare. As operational and tactical conventional and SOF commanders have attempted to overcome problems through deconfliction and the development of TTP, senior leaders must use critical thinking behavior to permanently solve those problems along the DOTMLPF model. Albert Einstein argued that “problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them”, and as such it is not the warrior on the battlefield who bears the responsibility to fix integration (Fastabend and Simpson 2004, 4). To foster critical thinking behavior, rank must be left at the door, and “group think”, where subordinates simply mimic the thinking of their superiors, must be eliminated. This is perhaps the legacy of the cultural difference between conventional forces and SOF, passed from generation to generation and commonly accepted without knowing or asking why.

Critical thinking is a learned behavior that is underpinned by education; therefore training is the next most important facet to undertake. The officer education system and non commissioned officer education system can be the most effective lever of cultural change with regards to integration (Fastabend and Simpson 2004, 5). From the most junior NCOs and officers throughout their professional education, a thorough review of the institutional educational system is required to assess its effectiveness, to ensure that conventional-SOF instruction is incorporated.

Training for LNOs is also a deficiency that must be addressed and corrected. This is a function that has been identified in JP 0-2, *Unified Action*, as critical to the successful integration and C2 of joint forces, yet no doctrine or program to train liaison officers or NCOs exists within the military. It cannot be assumed that those identified as LNOs



inherently know what their duties, responsibilities, and expanded purpose are. As the author can attest it is a highly important staff function that takes too much trial and error to master.

In addition to developing an LNO training program, the CTCs must adapt and develop relevant scenarios incorporating the special skill sets of SOF in order to enable joint training with conventional forces. Language skills, civil-military operations, PSYOP, FID, and UW must all be professionally infused in training scenarios at the CTCs to warrant SOF participation with conventional forces that replicates what is occurring on the battlefield. If a rotation to a CTC is to be the culminating event for a unit prior to an operational deployment, it should have every joint force multiplier represented.

Furthermore, the right equipment, namely an easily installed ABCS for SOF nonstandard vehicles, and AN/PRC-148 radios for conventional forces should be fielded to further enable C2 during integrated operations. Numerous examples of near-fratricide incidents due to SOF locally purchased vehicles not being equipped with ABCS equipment, coupled with the inability of conventional forces to effectively communicate by radio with adjacent SOF units only a few kilometers away underscore this need.

In conclusion, behavior and the leaders who shape it are the impetus to developing a culture of innovation within the military. Conventional forces and SOF are fighting integrated under the most difficult of circumstances with inadequate doctrine, insufficient organizational structure, training not wholly relevant to the COE, with materials that do not fully abet C2, and leadership that is obligated with the responsibility to enable their success, but stands somewhat culturally biased against doing so. The

consequences of not adapting and innovating are failure. The enemies of the US are studying its successes, copying its strengths, and tailoring their own capabilities to attack perceived weaknesses. Other emerging powers are developing asymmetric strategies and tactics that bypass our current capabilities altogether (Fastabend and Simpson 2004,1). If the issues concerning conventional forces and SOF are ignored, then this seam could become a fissure, and in time become a crevasse for known and future US enemies to exploit. Quite simply, there exists a crossroads in US military affairs, with USSOCOM appointed as the lead agency in the execution of the WOT. Further study and analysis is required to ensure that truly synergistic integration occurs and therefore increases joint warfighting capability. Conventional warriors and leaders must learn to prepare and fight irregular wars, and to be supported by and directly support SOF in doing so. Failure to integrate effectively means death and destruction on the battlefield. The choice is quite simply, “adapt or die” (Fastabend and Simpson 2004, 2).

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